

WAR AND WAR LEADERSHIP

COUP AND STATUS

Comanche war notions conformed to the general Plains pattern of raiding and coup-counting.¹ The raid might be made by a party of any size, from a single warrior up. The coup was an individual exploit, made in any contact with the enemy, *after* it had been socially recognized both as achieved in fact and as worthy of distinction; a rough equivalent of an official citation after a modern engagement, if such were undiluted by political considerations. 726

The life of the Comanche male centered around warfare and raiding. The main objectives were the taking of horses, the counting of coup, and the killing of enemies. Motives for horse-taking were two. Horses, as we have seen, were the important form of property accumulation; the man who had a large herd was wealthy; he could afford generosity to his friends and relatives; he harbored visiting guests from other tribes. Horses also gained him prestige for bravery and cleverness; the taking of horses under difficult conditions provided opportunity for exploits of valor. Such exploits made reputation. Horses gained by inheritance, gift, or breeding reflected the first value, but not the second (except as a carry-over). The killing of enemies was similar in that it led to prestige through accumulation of war honors; but it showed a more direct tribal function when vengeance for the death of a tribesman came in question—though tribal interest was not absent from horse-taking; to have your horses stolen was to be out-matched and shamed by the successful thief (an out-triber). 556 555

It required more bravery to hit an adversary with a spear or a war club than to pierce him with a bow-driven arrow or a gun-driven bullet. Thus striking an enemy gave ground for an honored coup, while long-distance killing did not. The how of the killing mattered more than the killing itself. A coup was more valued than a scalp, for, "Anybody could scalp a dead man." But the Comanche considered the removal of a scalp under fire as worthy of a coup. How much scalp the Comanche took depended on how hot the circumstances were. He preferred to take the whole scalp, but if he was pressed for time he seized only what he could get. Scalps were used in the Victory Dance and were desirable as fringe decoration for shirts and shields. 727 555

In the foregoing, and in the following, the legal analysis is deliberately pushed further than the Comanche would consciously push it. In any 128 727

¹ Cf. George Bird Grinnell, *Coup and Scalp Among the Plains Indians* (American Anthropologist, vol. 12, 1910), pp. 296-310.

128
 727 primitive legal thinking, the fact and its legal recognition tend to fuse, and
 555 either is spoken of as the whole; the modern layman, e.g., still speaks of "my money in the bank" to describe what is neither his money, nor any money, nor in the bank, but a debt the bank owes him. So with this matter of the coup. The exploit is in strictness no coup, but the new material for one. If unrecognized, the exploit becomes a matter of individual memory, perhaps of individual grievance. *Only recognition in due "legal" form turns deed into coup.*² But as soon as recognized, the recognition aspect fades from thought, and the deed that was its reason and justification *seems* to stand alone. As in all cases where legal rights are accurately tailored to the facts, it is enough to deal with the facts. But that does not mean that the legal phases can be overlooked. The minute they are lacking, or are in dispute, they will become important, and may become crucial.³ This is the case with an exploit accomplished, unwitnessed, and not believed, or of one claimed by each of two or several as his own.

The stealing of tethered horses from within a hostile camp ranked as a very high honor, but it was not nearly so valued as striking a fallen enemy who lay near his own lines, or drawing blood from an enemy in hand to hand combat.

The Comanche honored two coups struck on the same victim by different persons. This arrangement was an efficient way of providing sufficient coups to meet the cultural demands of the society—an inflation of the currency of war prestige. The first man to reach the body of a fallen enemy struck it with his weapon and uttered the cry, "ahé" ("I claim it"), gaining thereby equal honor with the man who had done the killing. But if a bow or gun had been used to bring down the enemy, this second coup-counter received greater honor for his deed than did the slayer himself.

182 The problem of adjustment of institution to social end is interesting.
 727 Superficially, skill at long-distance killing would seem of more immediate
 555 social value to a fighting people. But the stress on hand-to-hand valor or dangerously close approach to the enemy is more than shallow glorification of wolf over fox. The deeds honored are in good part the kind of deeds that toughen a warrior to stand when he is needed. Grinnell, on the other hand, sees in it merely a cultural survival of the traditional days when the Cheyenne, for instance, fought perforce with sticks and stones because they had no bows or guns.⁴

² Note the ritual formula for the transference of a recognized coup by its owner-performer when the coup is given to a friend as a gift. See p. 29.

³ Cf. Ritual Evidence, pp. 103-106.

⁴ George Bird Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians* (New Haven, 1924), vol. 2, p. 36.

Lowie emphasizes the play aspect of this phase of warfare. "Obviously," 721
 he writes of the Crow, "the idea was not primarily to reduce a hostile force 555
 but to execute a 'stunt'; to play a game according to whimsical rules."³

In addition to the standardized honors any audacious deed performed
 against the enemy could be claimed as a coup by a Shoshone or Comanche.

WAR INITIATIVE

The prosecution of warfare was very much a matter of individual dis- 721
 cretion. Any Comanche was theoretically eligible to lead a war party. There
 was no chief or power which could say him nay. Were the individual not,
 however, a man of proved reputation or the possessor of potent medicine,
 his raid would remain strictly personal and private. He would simply be
 unable to muster a following. Nevertheless, no one would object to his going
 out alone. It was quite a different matter, on the other hand, if a man whose
 qualities had been attested in combat let his intention to take the war path
 be known. All fighters who wished to do so came to signify their desire to
 join his party. Dreams about a successful raid were not deemed necessary [787]
 as a sanction for starting a war party, but in most cases such dreams were
 the effective stimulus.

There were two primary motivations for organizing a war party. The
 first was an entirely personal matter, depending simply upon desire for
 action, honors, or horses. Merely to feel the urge was to be at liberty to
 muster such men as would volunteer to go. On the other hand, a war party
 instigator might bind himself to avenge the death of a fellow tribesman by
 enemy hands. A slain man's father carried a heavy weight upon his heart
 while his dead son remained unavenged. "His conscience is not clear."
 There was but one thing for him to do. He must seek out the lodge of a
 brave warrior who had compassion for his suffering and whom people would
 trust and follow. Carrying his sacred pipe, the father or relative of the dead
 man offered smoke. The warrior knew what was wanted. If he accepted the
 pipe, smoking with the emissary, he bound himself in contract to take out a
 party which would not return until it had taken an enemy scalp. (We were
 unable to discover a single instance in which the pledge was unfulfilled.)

The warrior made known to the camp that he was going forth. He was
 to avenge the death of "their" slain friend. He exhorted. He said the young
 men would join him; he told the people that braves did not care, though it
 meant death. The Vengeance Dance was held before departure. The dan-
 cers were those who were going to join the war party. This sort of war party

³ R. H. Lowie, *The Crow Indians* (New York, 1937), p. 228.

(b) to delegate the scouts, (c) to determine the camping places and periods 701
of rest, (d) to appoint the cook and water carriers, (e) to lay the general 624
strategy of attack, (f) to divide the booty, (g) to make a truce with the
enemies, and (h) to order turning back of the expedition.

In battle, though the leader set an example of courage and daring,
each man was free to fight according to the dictates of his medicine and his
personal inclinations. After an engagement or a stealthy garnering of horses,
the leader and war bonnet wearers covered the escape with rear guard
actions.

When raiders had put two to three days of safety between themselves 727●
and possible pursuers, they halted. Rest was needed. There were spoils to
divide. The leader's eyes had been open to industry and willingness. He had
noted or been told of the actions of his followers while in engagement. To
the man who excelled, he allowed first choice of the horses. Each member of
the party chose in turn according to his service as determined by the chief.
The leader took his pick of *what remained*. Then the succession of choices
was repeated in the same order as before. If there was an acute shortage of
horses, the cook was always taken care of. A nice adjustment, this: the cook
had been burdened with the meat supply. If there were too few horses, only
the bravest got any return. The leader, no matter what his deeds, got
nothing at all if there were not enough horses to go around; in this, as in
civil prosecutions, reputation and prestige-obligation counted for more than
their visible badge: horses. (It is interesting to speculate on whether this
would have persisted, had a *large* herd of horses had a productive economic
use as well as a prestige value.)

A reputation for fairness in dividing the spoils enhanced the prestige 624
of a war leader and gained him followers. Some men say that Quanah Par-
ker, the last great Comanche chief, did not do this; he frequently made
favorites of his relatives and took the best horses himself. Their fathers
refused to go on raids with him.

If a man on a raid was killed before the horses were divided, he was 727
counted out. This is in curious contrast to the strong revenge feeling and 428
the treatment of the cook. There can be no question of any principle akin to
"out of sight, out of mind." And there would normally be heirs at home.
However, if the horses had already been divided and he had claimed some
as his own, then, were he killed, those horses went to his heirs.⁷

⁷ The generalized principles included in the preceding paragraphs were not only given
as statements by informants but were confirmed by the text of the war histories collected
from the Comanches.

1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

HOEBEL]

LAW-WAYS OF COMANCHE INDIANS

27

"When the boy did these things the people wondered, but it was as his father had told him. 624

"A couple of nights later they set a camp, and the leader put a scout upon the hill to look for enemies. When he got there he saw two tipis on the other side. He turned back and came zig-zagging down the hill. When the war party saw him making the signal, the fighters ran for their horses, grabbing their spears and stringing their bows. The scout came in to report to the chief. He had seen two men returning to the tipis; it seemed as though they had seen him as he turned to leave the hill-top. 624 726

"The mounted warriors were off in a pell-mell rush about the hill. They came out there in the open. Yes! There they went. Three families of the enemy were scudding away in flight—like rabbits. The women were in front. The three men were riding behind them to cover their flight. Down on them the Comanches rode. One of the enemies had a fast horse. He circled back and forth trying to keep off the Comanches. Around he came. The boy on his war pony drove at him, his spear in hand. The enemy fell from his horse dead. The other two jumped from their horses; they began shooting with guns. The young Comanche turned his pony on them; in an instant he speared them both. It was over like that. He turned then and looked about. There were the dead enemies. Way back, the Comanches were coming strung out in a line. The fast ones were ahead, but his pony had left them far behind. The first man up hit all the victims and cried, 'ahé.' The others came and took the scalps.

"It had been a successful raid, so they all turned back to the main camp. When they got there, the people held a scalp dance. On the next morning some fine young maidens dressed up like warriors. They went over to the young brave's tipi before he was awake. They did the Shakedown Dance there and sang the songs. The boy's father came out. He knew what they were there for. He was proud of his son, so he gave these girls what they wanted. He gave them two horses. 624 727

"The next time the boy went with a war party he was its leader. They were going west. When they got to the enemy territory he got on his pony and worked it as he had before. After a while they came face to face with a party of Utes out looking for trouble, as they were. There was pause while the two lines stood facing each other. 624 726

"Then the boy rode out alone, circling before the waiting Utes. The Ute chief came out and chased him back.

"Now," said the youth to one of his followers, "you do as I have just done." Then he waited. When the Ute chief came chasing that Comanche, the young leader dashed down on him and killed him with his spear. That was his strategy. With a yell, he rode straight into the rest of the Utes. He killed two more of them—like lightning. When his fighters saw his brave example they followed him in. The Utes broke and fled. It was too much for them. Our people chased them a long way. Lots of them were killed, but the rest got away. After a while when the Comanches got tired they turned back. They scalped the dead bodies of the enemy and took what they wanted besides.

624 "The people were pleased when they got back to the camp with their great deeds.
 727 They had a big Victory Dance, celebrating almost until morning. The young girls came again to give a Shakedown Dance; the boy's father gave them three horses.

[126] "Later on the warriors gave a Horse Dance. It was a sign they were going on a raid. The boy was with them. This time they had a battle with the Osages. The enemy had three chiefs to lead them; they were out in front, so the young boy charged, killing them all. A regular dog fight followed. But the Osages were without their chiefs, so they could not last very long. When it was over the Comanches cut off the roaches of the Osages for scalps.

"The people gave dances just as before. This time the boy's father gave away four horses. Three years had passed. The boy was now a young man of great renown. He was a mighty fighter, a killer of chiefs.

624 "The wearers of the war bonnets held a meeting about him. They talked about the famous things he had done. It was decided the young man should be raised to the status of war chief.

"They got ready and set up a buffalo hide tipi, painted over with white clay. The people knew they were going to make a war chief of the young man. He was only nineteen years old, but he was very brave.

"They laid buffalo robes and blankets on the smooth floor for the warriors to sit upon; all was ready.

"The wearers of war bonnets were first to enter. The bravest went in first; the others followed after. They turned to the left as they passed through the entrance, walking all the way about the tipi until the first one came to the place at the right side of the door. They came in until they lined the edge of the floor. The leader sat at the west side. Then they waited for the young man.

"When his turn came he went through the door of the tipi and walked to the left until he came to a vacant space at the side of the leader. The leader got up to address the warriors. He repeated everything the brave had done, closing his speech with these words, 'This young man has done enough brave deeds. He is honorable and brave. He shall be one of us. He is as brave as any of us and we make him one of us. What is more, I honor him ahead of myself. Hereafter, he is chief in my stead.'

[554] "Turning to the young man, he took in his hands a fine war bonnet with two rows of feathers as a special honor. Putting the bonnet on the boy's head, he said to him, 'This is nothing but a bunch of feathers given by your friends.'

"The boy was now a war chief. Because the leader had made him chief in his stead, the young warrior walked right to the place to the north of the door and took his seat. The newest member usually had to sit at the end of the line to the south of the door, but he was the greatest fighter they had ever had.

"Then it was over. The young war leader rolled up his blanket and walked out; the others followed him."

* One has more than a sneaking suspicion that this story has been embellished with its portion of heroic ornament. But it was told to illustrate how a war bonnet was obtained, and that it does very well.

574 special request for a certain animal before the active hunters rode into the
224 slaughter.

Objects of material culture were personally owned; but the test of ownership was not production so much as use. Clothing was prepared and made by the women, but owned by the person who wore it. A robe made by a woman for herself was hers, while a robe made for her son or husband belonged to that worthy. Tools and utensils used by the women belonged to the women and were also made by them. Every warrior carried his own kit of tools for the making of bows and arrows. This kit was an indispensable part of his personal equipment and was always carried fastened to his body, so that no matter what the emergency he was prepared to equip himself with weapons. Some older men specialized in arrow-making. They gave arrows to petitioners with or without consideration. Each man marked his own arrows with distinctive feathers or by some characteristic of production. Women made saddles for themselves and held them as their own property. The man's saddle, which was of a slightly different style, was owned by the men. Among the Comanches they were made by Mexican captives who specialized in the trade for pay.

Medicine paraphernalia were made by the owner according to his vision directions. If the help of others was needed, they received no pay other than food. The medicine formula was privately owned, but could be transferred in consideration of payment, or given as gift, or inherited. The power itself, however, had to come through a dream as a confirmation of the efficacy of the transfer. War honors were another very distinct form of incorporeal property. These could be transferred as a gift of high esteem, as has been described. They were not, however, articles of trade in economic exchange.

The tipi, which was made, erected and moved by the woman, was not hers by proprietary right. The decision as to its disposal belonged to the husband, though if generous and well-disposed towards her, he frequently gave it to the wife on separation.

Throughout the simple catalogue of goods we find that articles of personal use were usually personally owned according to the principle of effective utilization.

INHERITANCE

428 In the disposal of a deceased's property there is but one rule which stood
768 out with constancy: upon the death of a person all effects of his (or her) personal usage were destroyed. This included clothing, weapons, saddles, tools, paraphernalia, and horses customarily ridden by the deceased. According to Neighbors, "They also killed their favorite wives, but this custom has



The Indian dress—Discovery of the watch—Half-past three—It strikes the alarm—Gathering up the plunder—A heart-rending sight—Probable cause of being unexpectedly attacked—The infernal pantomime—Blindfolded and lashed to a mule—Departure of the caravan—The uncomfortable ride—Performances on the tightrope—Tremendous applause—The night encampment—Favorite food of the Comanches—Appearance of the captives—Amusements at supper—Horseflesh hissing hot—Put to bed and tucked up—The captive's night thoughts—Crossing the river in a buffalo skin—The war whoop—Arrival at an Indian village—The wonderful watch—Original doctrines—The war dance—Description of an Indian village.

- 7/27 I soon became aware that the only members of the party who escaped the massacre, which proved to have been bloody as it was sudden, were Thomas Martin, John Stewart, Aikens, and myself. The first two had been secured much in the same manner I was, but Aikens, who was sleeping in a tent, had succeeded in escaping a short distance, and had engaged in a hot scuffle, during which he fired upon his assailants before he was overpowered. The first step taken by the savages, after the confusion had subsided, was to strip us of every particle of apparel, and clothe us in their own fashion of dress, which consisted simply [29] of buckskin leggings, with a hunting shirt of the same material fringed at the bottom, and at the cuffs, and tied in front with strings.

2: Lee T-5 (1855-1858) 1957

NO6 Comanche NO6

Discovery of the Watch

While they were stripping and dressing me in this manner, one of them picked up my coat and discovered the watch. He seized it with avidity, examined it intently, turning it over and over, immensely pleased, as his countenance plainly indicated, with the singular and pretty bauble. While thus regarding it, the minute hand ticked round to half-past three, when the alarm went off. The utter astonishment of the Indian was beyond description. Holding it out at extreme arm's length, his head thrown back, and staring wildly, he was too much surprised, as it roared and rattled for two minutes, to decide whether it was safest to let it fall to the ground or retain it in his grasp. By the time it ceased, a dozen had gathered round him, looking into each other's faces in silent wonder. The one who held it presently pointed to me, then at the watch, then at the spot where he had found it, speaking at the same time fast and earnestly, informing them, I suppose, that I was the owner of it. Approaching and holding it out to me, they made signs expressive of their desire that I would cause it to repeat the alarm. The idea at once flashed upon my mind, that I might make it serve a useful purpose. They untied my hands—when I accepted it with an air of reverence and adoration, wound it up solemnly, and so regulated it that in a few minutes off it went again, and again was the dusky crowd struck with increased wonder and astonishment. This was repeated frequently, the savages in the meantime holding it to their ears to hear it tick as they had seen me do, when the chief wrapped it carefully and tenderly in his deerskin pouch and placed it in his bosom, not, however, until I had comprehended from their gestures, such as pointing upwards, then at the watch, then at myself, that they regarded it as something supernatural which connected me with the Great Spirit.

Three Years Among the Comanches

- 727 Their next step was to collect the plunder. In this, they were, indeed, thorough. Not only did they gather up all our buffalo skins, Mexican blankets, rifles and revolvers, culinary utensils, and the like, but the dead bodies were stripped to the last shred, and tied on the backs of their mules. Nothing was left behind. By this time the morning light began to break on the eastern mountains, and preparations were made to depart. Before starting, however, they unbound our feet, conducted us through the camp, pointing out the stark corpses of our butchered comrades, who had lain down to sleep with such light and happy hearts the night before. The scene was awful and heart-rending beyond the imagination of man to conceive. Not satisfied with merely putting them to death, they had cut and hacked the poor, cold bodies in the most brutal and wanton manner; some having their arms and hands chopped off, others emboweled, and still others with their tongues drawn out and sharp sticks thrust through them. They then led us out some three or four hundred yards from the camp and pointed out the dead bodies of the sentinels, thus assuring us that not one of the entire party had escaped. The bodies of the sentinels were lying close together at the south side of a thicket, which suggested to me the probable reason of our being surprised before an alarm was given. The night, as I have said, was chilly, and instead of riding round the camp at proper distances from each other, as was their duty, they had undoubtedly huddled together under the thicket, in order to protect themselves from the cold wind that swept down the valley. In this position the Indians had crept up unperceived through the fog, and dispatched them so suddenly there was no opportunity to make an outcry. Beyond question we had been watched from the mountains ever since our arrival in the

The Infernal Pantomime

valley—indeed, I learned as much from them afterwards—⁷²⁷ so that they had plenty of time to deliberate upon the plan of attack. Before leaving Texas, I had insisted upon taking with me a favorite watch dog, but Aikens was confident he would prove only an annoyance, and I was persuaded, though reluctantly, to leave him behind. Had I adhered to my purpose, his vigilance, peradventure, might have saved us, for though they numbered between two and three hundred, I have no doubt we could have repelled them, had we stood on the defense and been prepared to receive them.

During all the time they were thus exhibiting the result of their savage work, they resorted to every hideous device to inspire us with terror. They would rush toward us with uplifted tomahawks, stained with blood, as if determined to strike, or grasp us by the hair, flourishing their knives around our heads as though intending to take our scalps. So far as I could understand their infernal shouts and pantomime, they sought to tell us that the fate which had overtaken our unfortunate companions not only awaited us, but likewise the whole race of the hated white man. All the dead, without exception, were scalped and the scalps, still fresh, were dangling from their belts.

This sickening and frightful ceremony ended, dressed deerskins were thrown over our heads, drawn down over the face, and tied with a string, closely about the neck. We were thus completely blindfolded, and would soon have suffocated, had not a small hole been cut through the skin, under the nose, and in front of the mouth, sufficient to admit air necessary for respiration. We were then each mounted on a mule over an Indian saddle without stirrups, our hands tied behind us at the wrists, our feet brought as near together as possible under the body of the animal and

Three Years Among the Comanches

727 firmly lashed. In this situation it was possible for us to roll off sideways if we pleased, but it was impossible to extricate ourselves from the beasts.

[492] The caravan set forward in the following order: Our drove in advance, with outriders in front, and to the right and left, guarding it in the same manner we had previously; behind the drove rode the warriors, and in their rear came the pack mules, and the mules bearing the prisoners, without bridles, but left to follow at their own leisure and discretion. It is customary, not only with the Indians on such occasions as this, but with Mexican and Texan drovers on a long march, to leave their pack mules free to follow, and never do they stray out of the line or linger many rods behind. Our position, bound as we were, however, was not comfortable. Utterly powerless, so far as guiding the animal was concerned, which, like the wind, wandered where it listed, sometimes pushing and crowding in among the pack mules, sometimes suddenly stopping to take a bite or two of grass, and in that natural and innocent act, throwing us forward on the pommel of the saddle with the impression we were going over his head, the next moment starting suddenly on a sharp trot, throwing us as far backward—our predicament was indeed awkward as it was tormenting. But these were only the light afflictions and trials of the prairie. When our journey came to lead us through strips of timber land, as it often did, then the measure of our tribulation was full, indeed. The first time the thoughtless brute ran under a limb, striking me in the face and knocking me off, or rather turning me round so that my head reversed positions with my feet, the sensation produced was horrible, but practice makes perfect is a true adage, and, in time, habituates a man to almost anything. My frequent repetitions of this performance on the *tightrope*

Lashed to a Mule

rendered me an adept in this sort of somersault. There was ⁷²⁷ one consolation attending it, the moment I went over, the mule would invariably stop, and an Indian as invariably run and right me up again.

Unable to see, I was in perpetual suspense. If the mule happened to be traveling at a sharp pace on these occasions, and the branches strong, it became a violent and serious affair, not only to the extent of inflicting great pain, but of endangering life. As it was, my face and breast were sorely bruised, resembling more the appearance of a pugilist returning from some Long Point than the ordinary features of a man. It afterwards afforded the Indians most excellent ^[522] sport, a subject for infinite jest, and every performance was treated with "tremenduous applause." No comic actor ever so amused his audience. Indeed, I could tell sometimes from the laughter that would begin to arise that danger was near, and lying close on the mule's neck, escape it. It was aggravating beyond endurance, converting any humbler emotions I might have entertained to those of uncontrollable wrath. If each malediction I bestowed on the high cheek-boned, copper-colored demons, and which came from the bottom of my heart, had possessed the weight of a grain of mustard seed, the whole Comanche nation would have soon been attending to their own torments instead of mine, in another and a hotter world.

About noon of the first day's march, the cavalcade halted, repacked the mules, roasted some venison, and after an hour's delay proceeded on the journey. At dark they again stopped for the night. When permitted to dismount, and the blindfold had been taken from my eyes, I discovered we were in a narrow ravine, a lonely and secluded spot, with high precipitous mountains rising close on either side, and near a large spring which gushed from a rock, the source

Three Years Among the Comanches

● 727 of a considerable rivulet. The cords were here unloosed from my wrists; nevertheless, I was pinioned back from the shoulders, leaving my arms so far at liberty, however, that I could raise my hands to my mouth. The drove properly herded, one or two horses were shot, and the meat brought in for supper.

627 I may as well state, in this connection, that horseflesh is 262 the favorite food of a Comanche Indian. They do devour great quantities of venison and buffalo meat, but these are universally considered as greatly inferior to the steaks cut from the carcass of a mustang. The woods and prairies are covered with wild fowl, and the streams abound with delicious trout and other fish, yet none of these are ever made use of as an article of diet.

A fire was now kindled, and the warriors gathered round it, the prisoners in the center. This was the first opportunity I had of seeing and speaking to my fellow captives. Martin was silent and dejected, apparently absorbed in his own reflections, and little disposed to converse. Stewart was nervous and frightened, bewailing his hard fate in tears; but Aikens maintained a cheerful spirit, advising us to keep up our courage and look the matter coolly in the face until the last. While conversing, the Indians were engaged boiling their meat, which they ate without any accompaniment [267] whatever, save water dipped from the spring in buffalo horns; the greensward serving as their table spread, and their fingers as knives and forks. Having satisfied themselves, they now seemed to take into consideration the appetites of their captives.

727 In wandering menageries, the curiosity of civilized assemblages is sometimes excited to see "the animals fed in the presence of the audience." Something of this kind actuated the Comanches on this occasion. At all events, they re-

Horseflesh Hissing Hot

solved to make their disgusting horseflesh serve the double⁷²⁷ purpose of supplying us food for the body, and themselves food for mirth. In our Indian dresses, which consisted of^[291] leggings rising only to the knee, and a short hunting coat, the upper portion of the leg, that is, above the leggin, was necessarily bare. As we sat upon the ground together, our⁷²⁷ feet tied, it was likewise necessarily exposed. When the⁵²² meat designed for us had boiled until the fat began to fry and sputter, they would throw it with such marvelous dexterity from the end of their roasting sticks, that it would fall on our naked limbs hissing hot. If the laziest reader of this book will try a similar experiment on himself, he will find it admirably calculated to arouse his activity. I venture to affirm he will squirm more energetically, turn over quicker, and throw a greater amount of exercise into a given period than he ever did before in his life. It had the same effect on us, and the muscular demonstrations we made during the exhibition "brought down the house" far more uproariously than any of our previous performances during the day. It resulted in my declining supper altogether, having a prejudice against the waiters in attendance, and of raising broad blisters on my person, the scars of which I will carry with me to the grave.

At the conclusion of these exercises, so refreshing on one side and so painful on the other, the warriors threw themselves on the ground to sleep. They lay near each other,^[26] forming a large circle, leaving a space in the center some fifty feet in diameter. Our sleeping apartment was in this⁷²⁷ space, and we were "put to bed and tucked up" in the following original fashion: First, we were made to lie down upon our backs, with our arms and feet extended. Four stakes were then driven firmly through the sward, to which our hands and feet were fastened, holding us in such a

Three Years Among the Comanches

• *Position* that they were as wide apart as possible. Then two other stakes were driven close on either side of the neck, and a strong strip of buffalo hide tied from one to the other, so that it passed under the chin, across the throat. Thus we lay upon our backs, unable to move head, hand, or foot.

• I had now tasted nothing, save a little water, for nearly twenty-four hours, yet was not hungry; had undergone hardships rarely endured, yet was not weary; my excited imagination had driven afar off the desire for rest or for refreshment. During the long watches of the night, my brain was busied with ten thousand fancies; but through the maze and shadow of them all, I could not see the remotest prospect of deliverance. I gazed up into the sky—I could gaze nowhere else—and wondered how it was that the good God who dwelt above the stars, omnipotent as He was just, could permit such a wrong as I was suffering to be perpetrated in His sight. Thus the wretched night, without having for one moment closed my eyes, passed off. The warriors, at length, bounding to their feet and preparing with much bustling preparation to commence the adventures of another day, to end—I knew not where.

The second day of the march, about midday, we reached a wide river—(I have since learned it was the upper Río Grande, separating that portion of Mexico in which we were captured from the vague and unknown region of country distinguished on the map of northwestern Texas as the Presidio.) Here we were subjected to considerable delay. There was a large number of animals to be crossed over, besides a great amount of what they regarded, and which in fact was, valuable plunder.

At the point of the river where we reached it, was a low, long gravelly beach—a high, perpendicular rocky bluff di-

Crossing the River

rectly opposite—but a mile below the bluff was another gravelly beach, almost precisely similar to the one at which we had arrived, and opposite that, and below us, was likewise a high bluff, so that in crossing, it was necessary to move in a diagonal direction, as well as a long distance. The usual labor was expended, and the usual means resorted to in passing the drove, which, in consequence of the low water extending from the opposite beaches, left only the main channel, a distance, perhaps, of a hundred yards, to be swum. When it came our turn to take passage, the blindfolds were removed, and each was seated in a little buffalo-skin boat, an invention original, I believe, with the Comanche tribes, and capable of being taken apart, folded into a small compass, and carried as baggage. To the bow of these boats were hitched one end of a hair rope, the other to the tails of our mules, who safely ferried us from shore to shore.

That night we encamped at the foot of the mountain, and the whole of the next day traveled, as near as I could judge, over a steep, rough, and uneven road. During the entire trip, I was subjected to the same annoyances of being run under trees, burned with hot horseflesh, and staked down at night, as described above.

Early in the afternoon of the fourth day the warriors raised the war whoop, and afar off was heard another war whoop in reply. As we advanced, over what appeared to me a smooth plain, the answering voices grew more and more distinct, until finally the approaching parties met and intermingled. Having halted, I was taken from the mule, and when allowed the liberty of my eyes, found myself and companions standing together, in the midst of a great number of tents, and surrounded by five or six hundred men, all pushing forward to catch a glimpse of us.

Three Years Among the Comanches

- 727 Some little time elapsed, when the crowd gave way, forming a passage through which advanced the leader of the war party, accompanied by an aged chief and a squaw, the latter the only one of her sex then anywhere to be seen. Having reached us, the watch was produced and handed to me, with signs indicating they wished me to exhibit its marvelous qualities.

It became me now to put forth all my histrionic powers, and to feign emotions far different from the real ones that were struggling in my bosom. My object was to take advantage of their credulity and superstition to establish among them the notion that it was a thing of life—a spiritual medium, having powers of speech—through which their chiefs and prophets, and great warriors who had gone to the land of spirits, could converse in a language perfectly intelligible to me, but utterly incomprehensible to them; to indoctrinate them into the solemn belief that my old “turnip,” as I usually called it, was no less than the brother or offspring of the sun, and on such intimate and familiar terms with him, that it could foretell through me the precise moment he would reach any given point in the heavens, and that such was the unity of feeling existing between them that the short second hand of the watch, in its lesser sphere, kept corresponding pace with him as he went round and round the world. Finally, and most especially, to imbue their minds with the importance and solemnity of this one great truth, that connected as the watch and myself were, both with the visible and invisible world, any mishap that should befall either would inevitably disarrange the machinery of universal nature, break a cogwheel, or something of the sort, and send us “all to smash.”

The character it became necessary for me to assume, therefore, was that of a missionary, expounding my pe-

The Wonderful Watch

cular doctrines among the heathen. Accordingly, I received 727 ● it at their hands in an attitude of great humility, and gazed upon it with that air of reverence which may be supposed characterizes the Hindoo kneeling before the graven image of a monkey, wound it up, held it to my ear, listened to the tick, tick, tick, with a solemnity of expression intended to convey the same idea, as if I had said to them in their own language: "Gentlemen Indians, I am now receiving important telegraphic dispatches from the other side of Jordan!" Presently, it sounded the alarm. It would have been a curious and interesting picture for an artist, could he have watched the various expressions of astonishment, awe, and wonder that overspread their features during the whirl and whirl and whiz of the cunning mechanism. Ejaculating their impressive "ugh, ugh," they looked seriously and inquiringly into each other's faces, as much as to say—"Well, I never; did you ever!"

Finally, the watch was taken by the old chief and formally presented to the squaw, whom I afterwards learned was his favorite wife. The presentation speech I was unable to understand, but surmised it was very similar to those which usually accompanies the presentation of flags in more civilized communities, that is to say, an exhortation to the recipient to stand by it until the last drop of blood has been spilled, and to preserve it, under any circumstances, "sacred and inviolate." This ceremony over, I was conducted to the chief's tent, regaled with a late dinner, horse 262 flesh being the only dish mentioned on the bill of fare, and this without the useless luxuries of salt and pepper, and very rare, when I was seated at the entrance, and had a brief opportunity of taking a view of the town.

This Indian village, in every material respect, was like 361 other Comanche villages with which I afterwards became

The War Dance

north winds in the wintry season, and in hot and sultry^{36/} weather shade them from the sun.

I had remained in the chief's tent but a short time when⁷²⁷ I was again conducted to the square. There I found Aikens,⁵³⁵ Martin, and Stewart. It was soon revealed we were to "cut a conspicuous figure" in a war dance. We have among us frequent ideal representations of savage customs which are horrible enough, but the mind labors and struggles in vain to select from the wide range of our language the exact words that will properly describe an Indian war dance round a *real* captive. They came forth bedizened in their traps and feathers, their tomahawks and scalping knives in their uplifted hands, great daubs of red paint above and below their eyes, circling round and round us on a spasmodic trot, uttering their hoarse guttural songs, which seemed to flow up through their savage throats over sharp rifts of phlegm. As they proceeded, their pace, such as it was, accelerated, and their songs grew loud and louder, rising gradually from a monotonous grunt into a hideous and indescribable howl. Very often, some one of them, deserting his place, would dart towards us with his drawn hatchet threatening to brain us, while another would seize us by the hair and go through the pantomime of scalping. Thus, for two hours, they continued to sing and dance, and whoop and yell, flourishing their tomahawks and knives over us, until, at last they were compelled to stop from mere exhaustion. The captives were then separated, myself being⁷²⁷ led back to the chief's tent, where I was tied down to stakes in the manner before described. Four days had now passed without repose, but weary nature, at length, demanded rest, and I sank into a troubled sleep.



The chief and his household—The matrimonial relation—Osolo, the Big Wolf—An Indian breakfast—The consultation—Moko, the favorite wife—The watch, once more—Mysterious assembling outside the camp—The captives stripped and bound—Preparations for the sacrifice—March of the warriors—The flint arrowheads—Scalping the prisoners—Sounding the war whoop—The torture—The desire to die—Taunting the victims—Compelled to look at the sufferers—The last act in the tragedy—Indian dogs—Return to camp—Obstinacy—Interview with Aikens—The sorrowful parting—Change of mind—Removal of the camp—Description of the country.

- 727 In the morning I was released from the uncomfortable
595 position I had occupied during the night, allowed to sit up with only my hands tied behind my back, a change which afforded inexpressible relief. I soon comprehended the number and character of the household in which necessity had forced me to take up board and lodging for an indefinite period of time. It consisted of a tall, stout Indian, who had apparently long passed the middle age of life, and his four wives. The latter were comparatively young, none of them exceeding twenty-three or twenty-four years. The youngest was by far the most comely and graceful and evidently the favorite. Each wife, as is the Comanche custom, had her separate and distinct apartment, consisting of a small tent erected outside of, but adjoining, the husband's.

Three Years Among the Comanches

264 Breakfast was then

ready, when, without more ado, each cut off a piece of meat, the size regulated by their appetites, and holding it between the fingers of one hand, with the fingers of the other scooped up the corn, filling their mouths alternately with flesh and vegetable.

- 727 An hour or two subsequently, a party of fifty, perhaps, 623 collected together and held a council, the Big Wolf presiding. It was evident that frequent references were made to me, and that I was spoken of in connection with the watch. In the course of the consultation, Moko, the chief's favorite wife, into whose sacred keeping it had been delivered, was called. Presenting it to me, she made the usual signs, signifying, "Make it go." On this occasion I resolved to risk, for the first time, the result of a refusal. Accordingly I pointed to the heavens, uttering a rigmarole of words without sense or connection, and solemnly shook my head. If I did not impress them with the fact that such an operation, just at that time, would be attended with "the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds," it was not because of any lack of effort on my part. My success far exceeded my expectations. Instead of exhibiting any manifestations of ill humor, they quietly submitted to the disappointment, and continued their consultation.

- 277 Immediately after the council had adjourned, I discovered the warriors assembling outside the village at a point distant a quarter of a mile. I was somewhat curious to learn the occasion of it, but I little dreamed it was the prelude to an exhibition horrible beyond measure. At length, I was waited upon by a strong guard and escorted into their midst. On arriving, I found my fellow captives had preceded me, and at once comprehended some terrible scene would ensue. There were Aikens, Martin, and Stewart, stripped entirely naked, and bound as follows: Strong, high

Preparations for the Sacrifice

posts, had been driven in the ground about three feet apart. 127 ●
Standing between them, their arms had been drawn up as far as they could reach, the right hand tied to the stake on the right side and the left hand to the stake opposite. Their feet, likewise, were tied to the posts near the ground. Martin and Stewart were thus strung up side by side. Directly in front of them, and within ten feet, was Aikens, in the same situation. A short time sufficed to divest me of my scanty Indian apparel and place me by the side of the latter, and in like condition. Thus we stood, or rather hung. Aikens and myself facing Stewart and Martin, all awaiting in tormenting suspense to learn what diabolical rite was now to be performed.

The Big Wolf and a number of his old men stationed themselves near us, when the war chief, at the head of the warriors, of whom there were probably two hundred, moved forward slowly, silently, and in single file. Their pace was peculiar and difficult to describe, half walk, half shuffle, a spasmodic, nervous motion, like the artificial motion of figures in a puppet show. Each carried in one hand his knife or tomahawk, in the other a flint stone, three inches or more in length and fashioned into the shape of a sharp pointed arrow. The head of the procession as it circled a long way round, first approached Stewart and Martin. As it passed them, two of the youngest warriors broke from the line, seized them by the hair, and scalped them, then resumed their places and moved on. This operation consists of cutting off only a portion of the skin which covers the skull, of the dimensions of a dollar, and does not necessarily destroy life, as is very generally supposed; on the contrary, I have seen men, resident on the borders of Texas, who had been scalped and yet were alive and well. In this instance, the wounds inflicted were by no means mortal; neverthe-

Three Years Among the Comanches

- 227 less, blood flowed from them in profusion, running down over the face, and trickling from their long beards.

They passed Aikens and myself without molestation, marching round again in the same order as before. Up to this time there had been entire silence, except a yell from the two young men when in the act of scalping, but now the whole party halted a half-minute, and slapping their hands upon their mouths, united in a general and energetic war whoop. Then in silence the circuitous march was continued. When they reached Stewart and Martin the second time, the sharp flint arrowheads were brought into requisition. Each man, as he passed, with a wild screech, would brandish his tomahawk in their faces an instant, and then draw the sharp point of the stone across their bodies, not cutting deep, but penetrating the flesh just far enough to cause the blood to ooze out in great crimson gouts. By the time the line had passed, our poor suffering companions presented an awful spectacle. Still they left Aikens and myself as yet unharmed; nevertheless, we regarded it as a matter of certainty that very soon we should be subjected to similar tortures. We would have been devoutly thankful at that terrible hour—would have hailed it as a grateful privilege—could we have been permitted to choose our own mode of being put to death. How many times they circled round, halting to sound the war whoop, and going through the same demoniac exercise, I cannot tell. Suffice it to say, they persisted in the hellish work until every inch of the bodies of the unhappy men was haggled, and hacked and scarified, and covered with clotted blood. It would have been a relief to me, much more to them, could they have only died, but the object of the tormentors was to drain the fountain of their lives by slow degrees.

In the progress of their torture, there occurred an inter-

Last Act of the Tragedy

mission of some quarter of an hour. During this period,⁷²⁷ some threw themselves on the ground and lighted their pipes, others collected in little groups, all, however, laughing and shouting, and pointing their fingers at the prisoners in derision, as if taunting them as cowards and miscreants. The prisoners bore themselves differently. Stewart uttered not a word, but his sobs and groans were such as only the intensest pain and agony can wring from the human heart. On the contrary, the pitiful cries and prayers of Martin were unceasing. Constantly he was exclaiming—"Oh! God have mercy on me!" "Oh, Father in heaven pity me!" "Oh! Lord Jesus, come and put me out of pain!" and many other expressions of like character.

I hung down my head and closed my eyes to shut out from sight the heart-sickening scene before me, but this poor comfort was not vouchsafed me. They would grasp myself, as well as Aikens, by the hair, drawing our heads back violently, compelling us, however unwillingly, to stare directly at the agonized and writhing sufferers.

At the end of, perhaps, two hours, came the last act of the fearful tragedy. The warriors halted on their last round in the form of a half-circle, when two of them moved out from the center, striking into the war dance, raising the war song, advancing, receding, now moving to the right, now to the left, occupying ten minutes in proceeding as many paces. Finally, they reached the victims, for some time danced before them, as it were, the hideous dance of hell, then drew their hatchets suddenly, and sent the bright blades crashing through their skulls.

The bodies were taken down and rudely thrown aside upon the ground. What mattered it? They were at rest at last.

Aikens and myself now anticipated we would be com-

Three Years Among the Comanches

● 127 pelled to suffer the same fate, and endeavored to prepare ourselves to meet it. To our astonishment, however, we were unbound, taken in charge by separate guards, reinvested in our hunting shirts and leggins, and started towards the camp. As we moved off, I turned my head to take a last lingering look at my dead companions, and saw that the Indian dogs had already gathered round the corpses and were lapping the blood from their innumerable wounds.

Returned to the same tent from which I had been taken to witness these barbarities, and again tied hand and foot, it may well be imagined I had abundant food for reflection. My contemplations were disheartening, indeed. Fully impressed with the belief that the novelty of the watch would presently pass away, and that it was foreordained, sooner or later, I must also suffer in like manner at the stake, the prevailing thought with me was how I might reach death, yet avoid their tortures. Self-destruction became a subject upon which I meditated, long and seriously. It was, however, a subject most repugnant to my nature. Whether, at any time, I would have taken my own life, if the means to do it had been allowed me, I can hardly determine; as it was, every instrument necessary to effect such a purpose was kept wholly beyond my reach.

The more I mused on the atrocities I had seen—the more the bleeding, ghastly forms of Stewart and Martin rose before me, as they did constantly day and night, both in my waking and sleeping hours—the more bitter became my feelings towards their murderers. My bosom scorched and burned with the desire of vengeance. I luxuriated in day-dreams—became lost in the labyrinth of imagination—at one time fancying myself with an invading army come to sweep the barbarisms from the face of the earth—at another with my old companions in arms, the Texas Rangers, dash-

Obstinacy

ing upon them, slaughtering and slaying until they whined for mercy, like their own vile curs. 727 ●

Indulging such moods as these, I was one day unbound and ordered to perform some menial office. Previously, however, I had determined in my heart to kill at least one or more of them the first opportunity that offered, partly to gratify my vengeance, but more especially actuated by the hope that in the melee, prompted by sudden wrath, they would dispatch me at once and save me from a lingering death at the stake. When, therefore, the cords were unfastened and I stood erect with free limbs, instead of obeying the command, I seized the first thing within my reach, which happened to be a wooden pothook, and hurled it at an Indian with all my strength. Well was it for him that it missed its aim. Instantly I was surrounded and borne down, but instead of producing the effect intended, the unexpected assault convulsed them with laughter. The next day, and the next, and every few days thereafter, I was unloosed and directed to skin a deer, or bring wood or water, they taking special care, in the meantime, to keep all dangerous weapons out of my reach and a sufficient number about me to prevent serious mischief. But I refused, absolutely and defiantly. On occasions, also, at this period, when the watch was brought out, I would not touch it. The life I was leading had become so inconceivably irksome—they were such a filthy and cruel race—the disgusting camp so “smelled to heaven”—everything about me was so hopeless and so wretched that I became utterly reckless, longing only to shake off, I cared not how, at length, the heavy nightmare of existence. If, therefore, I had previously feigned the character of a humble and devout missionary with some degree of success, I now played the part of an obstinate jackass to absolute perfection. [415] [522] [515] [364]

Three Years Among the Comanches

- 727 I had not seen Aikens since the day we separated at "the place of torment." What fate had befallen him was altogether unknown to me. It was, consequently, with much surprise that I saw him one day led into my tent, surrounded by a formidable guard. He was permitted to sit down beside me and an hour's time was granted, during which we were at liberty to converse.

He was far more familiar with Indian life and customs than myself, understood their signs and language better, so much more that I placed great reliance on his judgment. From him I learned that he had been kept a close prisoner in a tent on the outskirts of the village, and had experienced severer treatment than I had been subjected to—that he was now about to be carried to some distant tribe, and that this interview was allowed in order that we might have an opportunity of bidding each other farewell. No man could foresee his destiny, he said, but as for his own, there remained not a lingering doubt in his mind but that he was doomed to die by torture. He accounted for not having suffered with Stewart and Martin by saying it was not their custom to put more than two to death, in that way, at the same time; but he was convinced it was their intention to sacrifice him as soon as the tribe was reached they were now about to visit. However, not the shadow of an opportunity to escape should be lost, even though the chances against him were as ten thousand to one.

This was his judgment as regarded himself, but as to me, he was confident that with proper caution and prudence, I might eventually, through the instrumentality of the watch, be enabled to escape. He had witnessed the effect it had produced on the chiefs and warriors assembled in the square on our first arrival; and his knowledge of Indian ignorance and superstition was sufficient to teach him that

Interview with Aikens

they believed, in truth, it was a living spirit in a silver body. 727 ●

When I recounted all that had occurred since we last separated—my refusal to wind it—my obstinacy in resisting their commands, and my attack upon the Indian when unbound, he became still more convinced. The fact they had pursued such a course towards me, which they had not towards him, was perfect evidence in his mind they intended to naturalize me, and that, so long, at least, as the watch remained in order, I need not fear death at their hands. But he advised me, by all means, to pursue an entirely different course from that lately adopted; on the contrary, to leave no effort untried to initiate myself into their favor—to cultivate their good will—to yield submission in all things, and to deceive them, if possible, into the belief that I preferred to dwell with them rather than with my own people. By pursuing this course, he represented the time would come at last when their vigilance would relax, and an opportunity of escaping safely from them would occur. We conversed of many things, past, present, and to come, losing not a moment of the precious hour. At its close, he was ordered by the guard to leave. Charging me, if ever I escaped, to communicate the intelligence of his misfortunes to his friend, Antonio Ferandez, of Corpus Christi, he bade me a sorrowful *adieu*, and passed out of the tent. I have never seen or heard of him since.

Soon after this, early one morning, I discovered the squaws busily engaged taking down the tents. One after another the dingy white cones came down until the whole village looked as if some sudden tempest had laid it in ruins. Every canvas, buffalo mattress, and blanket was then rolled up, the cooking kettles and the tent poles collected, and all packed firmly on the backs of a crowd of mules collected in the square. It was a busy and laborious scene,

Three Years Among the Comanches

⁴⁸⁴requiring much strength to elevate some of the packages
⁴⁶²to their place, yet it was all performed by women.

⁴⁶² The Comanche Indian in his village is the idlest, laziest being in existence, a sluggard and a glutton. His sole and only pursuits are war and hunting. His wife, besides attending to the domestic duties of the tent, plants his corn and reaps it, cultivates his tobacco, tans his buffalo hides—in fine, performs wholly, without the remotest aid from him, every particle and kind of labor, which, among civilized beings, devolves upon the husband. So now, while the women toiled and strained and lifted, the men moped stupidly around, smoking their pipes, or lolled upon the ground.

● ⁷²⁷ Everything in readiness, I was once more blindfolded,
⁴⁸⁴mounted, and tied, when the entire town, not only its men,
⁴⁹²women, and children, but its furniture, its tents, its public and private buildings, all moved off on the backs of mules and horses. There was not left one stone upon another of that city.

⁷²⁷ Fortunately, the mule upon which I rode was led, so that I escaped the annoyance that befell me, under similar circumstances, on a previous occasion. Being deprived of the use of my eyes on the journey, except when we encamped at night, I cannot give a description of the country over which we passed, further than to say we crossed over many mountains, and that it seemed to me a wild and barren region. At the end of three days, or three "sleeps," as a
[805] Comanche would express it, we reached the end of the journey. Here I found myself in a small village, of not more than twenty or thirty tents, inhabited by what appeared to be a portion of Big Wolf's tribe, on the bank of a considerable river that flowed to the southwest, and in a valley much larger than any I have before described.



The Valley of Mannasaw—Indian agriculture—The watch again—Chemakacho, the good white man—The bloody covenant—Life in a Comanche camp—Hawakakeno, the wide river—Comanche horsemanship—Dressing the buffalo skin—Indian apparel—Supreme nastiness—Marriage—The mode of burial—The accursed white man—Comanche prophets—Religion of the savages—Manner of communicating intelligence—Festival of the roasted dog—Sahonkeno, the Fox—The green corn dance—The white women—Painting the face—Return of the war party—Departure from the Valley of Mannasaw.

On our arrival, which was welcomed with no demonstrations whatever, the squaws unpacked the mules, and immediately engaged in erecting the tents, with the same assiduity they exhibited in taking them down. In a few days, though an hundred miles distant, we were, to all appearances, occupying the same village, having the same square, and the same streets—which in fact we were, save that it was located on a different spot, and contained a population numbering about two hundred more.

The valley, also, was a "counterfeit presentment" of the one we had left behind, except the stream whereon we had encamped was wider, and the mountains round about seemed to have fallen back. It was called *Mannasaw*, laying a heavy accent on the last syllable, the meaning whereof I do not know.

Three Years Among the Comanches

727 In time I came to understand that this was the usual summer residence of the tribe, where their corn and beans and tobacco were cultivated—that it, in fact, was their main camping ground, their home, and that the other valley was only resorted to for the purpose of hunting, during those moons when the hair on the buffalo is thick and long. In the suburbs of this village were extensive specimens of Indian agriculture. The Comanche women—for the men have nothing whatever to do with it—would not be likely to receive even a “volume of the Transactions,” were they to compete for the prize offered for the best system of farming at one of our state fairs. The expense of drainage and subsoil ploughing is small; nevertheless, they manage to raise respectable crops.

727 The confidence I had in the shrewdness and judgment of Aikens, and the encouragement I had received from him in our interview, inspired me with hope, and I resolved to follow his advice to the letter. My fame, evidently, had spread abroad through the new community soon after our arrival, for those I had never seen before came and gazed upon me for a long time, and then turned and walked seriously and thoughtfully away. It was not long before Moko came with a group of the new faces and presented me the watch. My obstinacy was now abandoned, and I fell again, very deep, into the mysterious mood. Winding it up and setting the alarm a minute or two ahead, I bowed my face before it—clasped it affectionately to my bosom—held it out at arm’s length before me in my two hands, regarding it with that intensity of expression with which a tragedian on the stage always regards a love letter just received—turning up my eyes adoringly towards the glorious heavens—and let it whiz!

The effect was solemn and satisfactory. I felt that I had

"The Good White Man"

made "a hit"—that the sharp eyes which could detect a ⁷²⁷ trail so far had failed to penetrate the thin veil which covered the deception. Up to this time, and never afterwards, did they attempt to open it, or exhibit any inclination to manage it themselves; nor did any other than Moko, the youngest wife of Big Wolf, ever have it in charge.

Moreover, I now became submissive, and when untied obeyed every order that was given me. I ran to the water-side and filled the Big Wolf's buffalo horn when he was thirsty, pounded his corn when he was hungry, spread his mattress and lighted his pipe, in fine, made myself generally useful. As Aikens had predicted, their vigilance did relax to such a degree that I was permitted to wander through the village, but not beyond it—to have a knife in my possession—to sleep without being bound—and so far ingratiated myself into their confidence and esteem that they christened me *Chemakacho*—"the good white man."

This was not done, however, until after I had entered ⁷²⁷ into a solemn league and covenant with the chief. It was ⁶⁷⁵ a singular bond, not to be found in any book or legal forms. A stick of wood eight or ten inches long and about two inches square was produced. On its different sides were carved numerous figures representing skeletons, scalps, tomahawks and other like devices. Receiving the stick from Big Wolf, I opened a vein on the back of my hand and carefully painted the carved characters with blood. The condition of this sanguinary agreement, as it was understood, at least by the party of one part, was that I would remain in the quiet and peaceable possession of said Big Wolf, his heirs and assigns, without any attempt, design, effort, idea, or intention of running away, while he, the aforesaid Big Wolf, on his part, for and in consideration thereof, covenanted, promised, bargained, agreed, and

Three Years Among the Comanches

727 solemnly obligated himself, in case I did, to make a skeleton of me in the shortest possible space of time, according to the Indian statutes in such case made and provided.

727 Though closely observed, and confined, within certain limits, like one out on bail in the old times of imprisonment for debt, I now enjoyed comparative freedom; and as day after day and week after week passed wearily away, had opportunities of observing their habits, customs, and peculiarities, and to become thoroughly conversant with life in a Comanche camp.

727 As before stated, the sole business of the male portion of the tribe was war and hunting. While in camp the Indian is idle, listless, sleeping the greater part of the day and all night. He is slovenly in his dress, except when he meets in council or goes on the war path, when he decorates himself with the scalps he has taken, which at other times hang in his tent. His prowess as a warrior is estimated in proportion to the number he possesses.

554 The most renowned brave in the camp of the Big Wolf—he who could boast the possession of the greatest number of these trophies—was *Hawakakeno*, the Wide River. He was, indeed, a brawny and powerful savage, terrible in battle and quarrelsome in the village. He was feared as well as admired; his word was law among his weaker brethren, and none of all his tribe could stand before him in single contest.

224 To supply the necessities of life, more or less are constrained daily to go out upon the hunt. In this, their only labor, they range within a circuit rarely extending more than four or five miles from the town. Their weapons, on these excursions, are the bow and arrow and the lance, both of which they use with great dexterity and skill, especially on horseback. Indeed, in the matter of horsemanship, I

Three Years Among the Comanches

746 of his voice that the sentiments to which he gave expression
241 came from the inmost depth of his heart. So near as I was
537 able to comprehend, he was commenting on the wonderful
goodness of the Great Spirit who gave them green corn in
its season, and exhorting them to thankfulness for the same.

746 The next day, outside the village, numerous fires were
241 kindled at short distances from each other round a large
circle, which included between one and two acres. Each
family had its separate fire, and by each fire was a quantity
of green corn, piled on a buffalo skin. When the squaws
had roasted it, the prophet, the civil and war chiefs, and a
few others took a position in the center of the circle, while
the tribe, numbering some six hundred, ranged themselves
outside the fires, and the dance began. Round and round

[533] they went, singing their green corn song, which sounded
[534] in my ears like the perpetual repetition of "ahow, aho, aho
ahow," keeping time to rude specimens of music ham-

[534] mmered out of a dry skin drawn over a hoop, and extracted
from a quick and violent collision of buffalo bones—a per-
formance similar to that common among Negro minstrels.
Finally, they huddled together on the south side of the
circle, and sat down. Karolo addressed them briefly, and
was followed in a few remarks by the chiefs. The prophet
then walked around the circle, raising his hands above the
separate piles of roasted corn as he passed them, talking
all the while, as if invoking a blessing, and having made
the circuit, the tribe gathered in distinct squads about the
several fires and commenced eating. When the roasted ears
were shelled to the last kernel, the festival of the green corn
dance was over, and they went back, singing, to the town.

729 It is a custom among them to paint their faces daily. I
302 was compelled, every morning, while with them, to pursue
this practice—to anoint my features with a preparation

Painting the Face

composed chiefly of a peculiar kind of clay—so that it would be difficult for a stranger to distinguish me from one of their own number. As I became more and more acquainted with those who inhabited the little village we had joined, I observed four girls, the youngest twelve, and the oldest, perhaps, eighteen, whose appearance attracted my attention. They had the copper-colored complexion, but not the high cheek bones and the coarse black hair and the peculiar expression of countenance that always distinguish the aborigines. On the other hand, they possessed the Anglo-Saxon face—their gait was different from that of the other women of the tribe—and what was the most extraordinary, they had fine light hair, inclined to auburn, and upon one of them it curled. They were a mystery to me, until one day I saw the women coming from the river where they had gone to bathe, and walking among them were these four, perfectly white. The paint had been washed from their faces in the water, revealing to me their race. I made assiduous inquiries of Big Wolf and others, and of themselves, but could obtain no satisfactory information. They knew no other than the language of the Comanches, and in all respects conformed to their manners and customs. It was, therefore, evident to me they had been captured in early childhood and remembered no other life than that they were then leading.

More or less of the tribe were almost constantly absent on the war path. Sometimes they would sally forth of their own motion; at others, a number of them would join a party from a different village happening to pass that way. Eventually they returned, and the manner of their approach indicated whether they had been successful, or the reverse. On one occasion, during the summer, they brought in a captive, blindfolded as I had been, and had a rousing war-

Three Years Among the Comanches

- 727 dance over him in the square. I longed for the privilege of speaking to him, but it was denied. The morning following his advent, he was tied on a mule, his face covered with buckskin, and escorted from the camp. I never could gain the least information from whence he came, or whither he was taken; but suppose he had been captured by a party belonging to another village, who simply halted at our encampment overnight, and got up the war dance by way of entertainment.

[517] 727 We were frequently visited by the chiefs and warriors of the surrounding tribes. They were, invariably, cordially welcomed and hospitably entertained. Then there was a pipe dance, which is the dance of love and friendship. They were invited to repose on the largest buffalo skins, and given to eat the flesh of a roasted dog, though the moon was not in the full—a luxury surpassing even the meat of the wild horse. I apprehend many were attracted to our camp through curiosity to see and hear the wonderful watch, the fame thereof, beyond question, having spread far and near. I come to this conclusion from the fact that speedily following their arrival, Moko would bring it forth, and call on me to make it talk.

[535] There was one visitor, in particular, a stout, surly chief, who in the course of the summer visited our camp many times. He appeared to have become fascinated with the watch, never growing weary of listening to the alarm. After Moko had finally placed it affectionately in her bosom, he would have long and earnest interviews with Big Wolf, the subject of their conversation being, as was easy to perceive, the mysterious watch. I learned that he was the chief of a tribe whose village was situated in a valley beyond the mountains at the distance of two days' journey, and that he was known as the Spotted Leopard.

2: Lee T-5 (1855-1858) 1957

NO6 Comanche NO6

Departure from the Valley of Mannasaw

Lounging about the camp, I now led a monotonous and ⁷²⁷●
weary life until about November, or, at least, until after ^[22]
the season of buffalo hunting had arrived, when I was or-
dered, unexpectedly, one morning, to mount a mule, and
riding forth from the camp, accompanied by Big Wolf and
half a dozen of his warriors, I left behind me forever the
beautiful valley of Mannasaw.



*The journey beyond the mountains—Capturing a bear—
The night encampment—Entrance into the valley of Les-
coha—The dashing escort—Camp of the Spotted Leopard
—Another war dance—No change of programme—The bar-
gain and sale—Renewal of the bloody covenant—Value of
a captive—Arrival of Moko with the watch—Attempt to
escape—Cutting the knee cord—Buffalo hunting—Battle
with the Apaches—Meeting of Rolling Thunder and
Spotted Leopard—Hanging by the heels—The arrival of
the white women captives.*

127 On this journey I was neither tied or blindfolded, but rode
[492] a bridled mule, while the warriors were mounted on their
487 best horses. They usually kept me in advance of them,
133 directing me when to turn to the right and left. We fol-
lowed a well-beaten trail that led in a northwest direction.
On reaching the head of the valley, we turned to the left,
and began the ascent of a wide, low range of mountains,
winding in and out of narrow passes and defiles, but still
gradually ascending, traveling in this manner some twenty
miles before reaching the summit. The descent on the op-
posite side was of equal extent.

133 The ravines were overgrown with dwarfish trees, and the
136 adjacent mountains in general were rocky, but occasionally
between the ridges that rose in succession one above the
other were small, level plats, covered with a heavy growth of
grass, upon which buffalo, deer, and antelopes were feeding.

The Night Encampment

While crossing one of these little prairies, we espied a ²²⁴ bear making his way to the mountain. A part of the Indian's equipage is a *lasso*, tied to his saddle girth, and in the skill and accuracy with which they throw it, they far excel the Mexicans. On this occasion it was brought into use. A couple of them galloped out, one dexterously throwing the noose over Bruin's neck and twitching him on his back, the other as dexterously throwing another over his hind legs, thus subjecting him to a most uncomfortable stretch, as they pulled in opposite directions. A scalping knife soon relieved him of his hide, and a portion of his carcass supplied our evening meal. Bear's flesh is often eaten by them, but is not regarded as equal to buffalo, beef, or venison. They are hunted considerably, however, for their oil, which ^[28] is used in the preparation of various kinds of skins.

Having descended the western slope of the mountain range, we encamped that night at the extreme point of a narrow valley, which seemed to run up a long distance between the hills. Wearied with a hard day's travel, I hastened to cook my own and Big Wolf's supper—for I was compelled to act towards him in the capacity of a servant—⁷²⁷
²⁶⁴ and then lay down to rest. Though I brought his water, and cooked his food, and slept in his tent, and was in fact, his menial and slave, Big Wolf never, in a single instance, placed the horn of water to his lips or put a morsel of flesh into his mouth until I had tasted them. This, also, was the case with the two chiefs to whom I subsequently belonged. Whether it was through fear of poison, or dictated by some singular superstition, is more than I am able to determine.

Setting out again early in the morning, we traveled down ⁰⁰⁰ the little winding valley until it opened into an extensive plain. Here we struck a narrow but very rapid stream, when

Three Years Among the Comanches

turning to the right, round the point of a high bluff we rode along its banks, discovering as we advanced broken patches of prairie where it was evident some tribe had grown its last year's corn. The valley is called, in the Indian [103] tongue, *Lescoha*, and the stream, which we were following towards its source, *Boge Lescoha*.

574 In the afternoon we came in sight of a large town situated directly at the foot of a mountain which bounded the plain on its northern side. A mile outside we were met by a party of eight or ten, who approached us on a dashing gallop and escorted us in. When we had reached the square, the same surly chief who had so often visited Big Wolf to listen to the voice of that wonderful thing which Moko carried in her bosom came forward and bade us welcome. Then I knew we were in the camp of the Spotted Leopard.

361 The village was built on both sides of the Boge Lescoha, which had its source in a large spring under the mountain, not far distant. It divided the town in the center, the civil chief's tent being on one side and the war chief's on the other.

127 A short half-hour only had passed, when the horn sounded 535 the war dance. I was conducted to the center somewhat nervous and apprehensive—the apparitions of Martin and Stewart flitting before my mental vision—nevertheless, there remained an inward confidence I would not be put to death, because I had kept the covenant. While in this state of perplexity, the warriors were issuing from their tents, whither they had gone when the horn sounded, to gird on their belts, and decorate themselves with such scalps as they possessed, and were assembling round me. The signal given, the dance began, and was conducted in the usual manner, such as I have before attempted to describe, but which the reader must see before he can fully

Value of a Captive

understand. It was brief—unusually so—and terminated⁷²⁷ without any damage, very much to my relief. ⁶³⁵

After the ceremony, I was conducted to the tent of one⁷²⁷ of the Spotted Leopard's wives, of whom he also had four.⁵⁷⁴ This was especially appropriated to the accommodation of Big Wolf, and inasmuch as I had always slept in the same tent with him at home, he did not think proper to alter the programme on this occasion.

In the morning, a large number of mules and horses were⁷²⁷ collected in the square, driven in from the surrounding⁴²⁵ pasture by the women. Piles of buffalo, deer, and beaver skins, also, were brought from the tents and packed on mules. I was then brought out by Big Wolf, who produced the bloody stick and delivered it to the Spotted Leopard, at the same time informing me I had been sold and assigned. To render the transfer legal, however, it became incumbent on me to reopen the vein on the back of my hand, and again stain the carved figures with blood, an act which, in view of the alternative of being⁴³⁵ butchered, I performed with great alacrity. This formality closed the bargain, when Big Wolf and his warriors departed, taking with them the avails of the sale. In this business transaction, I had the satisfaction of learning how much, in Indian estimation, I was worth, to wit: 120 animals, old and young, of the horse kind, and as many skins as three pack mules could⁴³⁵ carry.

From the first I entertained an inveterate dislike of the⁷²⁷ Spotted Leopard. He was morose, reserved, unsocial, and⁶²² there was a malignant expression about his mouth and eyes that told me as plainly as if it had been written in emphatic English on his forehead that he was a being who would delight in cruelty. These were my first impressions of him, and I never had occasion to modify them afterwards. But

Three Years Among the Comanches

● 727 among his wives, there was one who treated me with all
 622 the kindness I had previously received at the hands of
 Moko, the young consort of the Big Wolf, and she was
 [55] Kianceta, the Weasel.

727 At the end of four days, Big Wolf again made his appear-
 574 ance, attended by his four wives and a number of warriors.

Their arrival was celebrated by a pipe dance. This ceremony
 was conducted as follows: The wives of the two chiefs,
 myself, and several old men of the tribe were stationed in
 the center of the ring. At its side stood the Spotted Leopard,
 [27] with a lighted pipe made of red sandstone. As the warriors
 danced around, each, as he came opposite the chief, re-
 ceived the pipe at his hands, took a whiff or two, and
 handed it back. This ceremony was accompanied by one
 of their wild and peculiar songs, and when it was concluded,
 [52] Moko came forward with the watch, kissed it, presented it
 to me, and turning about, broke through the circle of war-
 riors, crying, and disappeared in a neighboring tent.

I caused it to sound the alarm, probably a dozen times,
 when the Spotted Leopard approached me with Kianceta
 by his side. Into the possession of the latter, the weird,
 mysterious thing, through which the Great Spirit spoke in
 a strange voice, was delivered, and the crowd dispersed.

000 Kianceta, the Weasel, was tall and slim, and erect as the
 young cedar that grew on the bank of the Boge Lescoha.
 She had an easy and elastic gait, as if shod with velvet
 springs, and in her movements there was a nameless grace
 and dignity which drew all eyes after her, as the magnet
 attracts the steel. She was dressed in buckskin moccasins,
 [29] and leggins colored red—a blue broadcloth skirt, tastefully
 embroidered with beads, and over this a bright calico short
 gown—articles obtained from the Mexican traders. Her
 [302] long hair, blacker than the feathers of the crow, fell down

Kianceta, the Weasel

over her shoulders in luxuriant profusion, halfway to the ^{3c2} ground, and around her forehead was a tin band, scalloped on the upper edge, after the fashion of a crown.

Kianceta was indeed comely to look upon, but her soul ⁷²⁷ was far more lovely than her form. Though an untutored ⁶⁰⁹ woman of the prairie—one of a low and ignorant class—I have reason to remember her with respect and gratitude. She sympathized with the poor captive when others laughed at his calamities—sat down by his side, and looked up sorrowfully into his face, when the young savages in the village beat him with stones and sticks until he sought shelter in the tent. An hundred times she stood between him and those who threatened harm—gave him corn when others had it not—attended him when sick—casting red-hot stones into a trough of water to make him a steam bath, and wrapping him in thick buffalo skins until his cold was broken up and his health restored.

Next morning the tribe was assembled, and Che-ra-se ⁷⁹³ chick-a-lo, the prophet, made a speech. He was not as ⁵⁷⁴ earnest and impressive as Karolo—palpably inferior in every respect—nevertheless, he was listened to with the most profound attention. At the conclusion of his exhortation, they indulged in a long and jolly feast, when Moko and the three other wives of Big Wolf came and kissed me ⁵² again and again, and then bestriding their mules, rode ⁵⁷⁶ away towards their own valley of Mannasaw, weeping as they went.

My time was now passed either in attending upon the ⁰⁰⁰ Spotted Leopard, or sauntering idly through the village, continually thinking of escape. This subject was never out of my mind. By observing the rising and setting sun, I could tell the points of compass, and recalling, as far as possible, the direction of the different routes I had taken

Three Years Among the Comanches

in my progress hither, made up my mind as to the course which would lead most directly to the white settlements. About half a mile from the camp was a deep, thickly timbered ravine, running back apparently a long distance among the mountains. I had been out to the entrance of this ravine with the chief in one of his rambles, and it occurred to me if I could manage to slip away from the camp unperceived, and get into it, escape was possible. Many a night my eyes were not closed in sleep, studying and musing over the plan. During the day I was constantly gazing toward the defile—some indefinable but powerful attraction turning my face thitherward.

Finally my plan was perfected—which was to steal away from the village in the night, trusting to travel many miles on the journey before the chief would awake. At length, after patient watching, the favorable moment, as I supposed, arrived. I was permitted at this time to carry a knife, and providing myself with some strips of venison, about twelve o'clock one night, when the chief was lost in deep slumber and the camp was silent, crawled softly from the tent and was about to make my way from the village and fly across the plain, when I was startled by the growl of a big dog, that confronted me, showing his white teeth. Presently he was joined by another, and another, until I found myself surrounded. Their growls awakened all the other curs, with which an Indian town is invariably overrun, and instantly a universal snarling and barking was heard from one end to the other of the camp. The disturbed women and warriors shouted to them, in a half-sleeping, half-waking state, to be still and lie down. Under these circumstances, further advance was useless, and I made my way back into the tent, as speedily and stealthily as the nature of my situation allowed, having in the meantime avoided observation.

Attempt to Escape

Though disappointed beyond measure, I was by no means so far discouraged as to abandon the enterprise, but determined still more firmly to avail myself of the first opportunity that occurred to put it into execution.

My orders were not to go beyond the boundaries of the village. However, as their watchfulness over me became less and less strict, I so far disregarded them, occasionally, as to wander a short way down the creek, or out to a little grove some rods from the village—at times being told by anyone who chose to exercise the authority, to go back; at others, left to return at leisure. This practice I kept up, until finally it became almost unnoticed. Emboldened by their increasing indifference, just at dusk one evening, at that point of obscurity between light and darkness when objects may be seen at some distance on the plain, but when it is difficult to distinguish between a man and an animal, I started off at a slow, careless pace towards the mouth of the ravine. Having proceeded, perhaps, a hundred rods, and when about to make a trial of my speed, I saw three warriors in advance, approaching me directly. I happened, at this moment to be near a cluster of bushes, and taking out my knife commenced cutting a forked stick, designing to deceive them into the belief that my business there was to obtain such an article for the purpose of more conveniently cooking the Spotted Leopard's meat; but my movements, especially at that hour, were too suspicious, and they were, evidently, not to be deceived.

Taking me by the arm, they led me back into camp, and on arriving there, called the chief one side and had a lengthened interview with him. At its close the chief pointed me into his tent, where I was tied down to stakes, on my back, in the same manner I had been bound when

Three Years Among the Comanches

● 727 first carried away into captivity. This, I supposed, was the extent of the penalty I was doomed to suffer, but a short time taught me I was sorely and painfully mistaken. The Spotted Leopard, drawing down my leggin, with the coolness of the most practised surgeon, drew the edge of his knife across the cartilage or tendon just below the kneecap of my right leg. The muscle was not entirely severed, as was evidently his intention. The object of this surgical operation was to cripple me in such manner as to render escape impossible, even should a favorable opportunity present itself. For two weeks I was kept tied down, the chief frequently, during that time, bending the leg back and forth, each time breaking open the wound afresh. Eventually, however, I was unbound, and the wound permitted to heal, leaving a formidable cicatrice, and rendering the limb extremely stiff, not to such a degree, however, as it was his purpose to make it.

224 In the winter following, some 250 of the warriors, armed
727 with bows and arrows, lances, tomahawks, and knives, set
492 out on their annual grand buffalo hunt. They were mounted on their choice horses, while I, who accompanied the chief as his servant, rode, unarmed, a dilapidated mule.

224 It is only in the cold months that the skin of the buffalo has any value for the purposes of traffic. Then, only, is it covered with wool, being, in the warm summer weather, with the exception of a tuft of mane, entirely bare. During the latter period they are only killed as the necessity of food requires—their skins then being used for the construction of tents.

224 On these annual excursions, they are followed by a large
492 number of mules that not only carry out their buffalo-hunting tents, which simply consist of one or more skins,

Three Years Among the Comanches

726 From the position I occupied I had a fair, unobstructed view of the battle. It was fierce and terrible. The horses reared, and plunged, and fell upon each other, their riders dealing blow for blow, and thrust for thrust, some falling from their saddles to the ground, and others trampling madly over them.

The Comanches outnumbered the enemy; nevertheless, they were forced to retreat, falling back down the hill almost to my position; but still they were not pursued, the Apaches appearing to be content to hold possession of the ground. Soon, the tribe of the Spotted Leopard again rallied and dashed once more to the attack. If possible, this contest was severer, as it was longer than the first. Again the fierce blow was given and returned; again horses and men intermingled in the melee—stumbled, fell, and rolled upon the ground, while the wide heavens resounded with their hideous shrieks and cries.

My blood thrilled through my veins as I looked upon the scene. I had mingled in encounters fierce even as that, but never before in the midst of the hottest fight was I overcome with such a sense of terror. To be an inactive spectator of a battle is far more painful than to be a participator in it.

I hoped devoutly during the engagement that the Comanches would be beaten, being impressed with the belief that if I should fall into the enemies' hands, my chances of escape would be increased, for I had often heard that the Apaches, though a most warlike nation, were more merciful to prisoners than others of their race. But in this

● 727 I was disappointed. The Apaches at length gave way, disappearing beyond the ridge. Instead of pursuing their advantage, however, the Comanches hastily gathered up their dead and retreated towards the mountains we had crossed.

2: Lee T-5 (1855-1858) 1957

NO6 Comanche NO6

Battle with the Apaches

As soon as they had left the ground, the Apaches again⁷²⁷ appeared upon the height, and bore away their dead also. It was a drawn battle.

This encounter was unexpected on both sides. The Apaches, as I learned, were gathered around a spring, cooking their meat, little expecting the approach of an enemy, when the van of our party came upon them. At that time a deadly strife existed between the tribes, and it would have been a scandalous violation of an Indian's idea of manhood to have separated, under such circumstances, without a bloody tilt at arms.

The Comanches lost in this battle seventeen warriors; the Apaches, probably as many more. Had the combatants belonged to a civilized people who keep a record of their wars, it would have furnished a thrilling page of history; but thousands of such sanguinary struggles take place on the lonely prairies of which the world knows not. That same season, however, they buried the tomahawk and danced the pipe dance, and henceforward were at peace.

The close of this eventful day was occupied in burying⁷²⁷ the slain, which ceremony was performed in their custom-⁷⁶⁴ary manner, except they seemed to chant the death song⁷⁷⁵ with more energy and feeling than on ordinary occasions. With them, death, at any time, even the nearest and dearest of their kindred, is not regarded as an event to be deplored, but on the contrary, to be welcomed with rejoicing; but when a warrior dies on the field of battle, their joy and exultation knows no bounds, for their crude theology assures them his departed spirit is, at once, caught up by the Great Spirit, and borne to the region of everlasting and supreme felicity.

We saw no more of the Apaches, and the following day²²⁴ turned our course up the prairie—crossed the mountains

Three Years Among the Comanches

224 into a still wider prairie—and there, at a watering place, pitched our camp. Here we remained two months, meeting with unanticipated success. Thousands and thousands of buffalo, in immense droves, were roving over the plain, and it was an easy task to obtain as many hides as the mules could carry home.

484 On the return, which was by a different route from that
574 we came, we fell in with a party of two or three hundred, a
622 friendly tribe, who accompanied us back to the camp. Their
[55] chief was Kan-sa-le-um-ko, the Rolling Thunder. He was agreeable, though sedate—a compound of benign dignity and solemnity—a chief who plainly preferred falling on his face before the prophet, in the time of the new moon, to dancing the war dance with the warriors.

574 The Rolling Thunder and his tribe remained with us a week, and it was, indeed, a week of carnival and merriment. First of all was the war dance, and then followed the solemn discourses of Che-ra-se-chick-a-lo, the prophet, and after them came the ring dance and the pipe dance, and the feast of the roasted dog. During these entertainments, the good Kianceta and myself played a conspicuous part in the exhibition of the watch. As on all former occasions, it captivated the simple children of nature, and particularly the [62] Rolling Thunder, whose reverent temperament led him to refer all mysteries, whether great or small, to the wonder-working power of the Great Spirit.

574 Soon after the departure of Rolling Thunder and his
● 127 people came another large party and pitched their hunting tents on the bank of the stream, outside the town. The day following their arrival, I observed our warriors, belted, and decorated with trinkets and scalps, moving towards their encampment. Something unusual, I felt confident, was about to take place. Distant but a quarter of a mile, I

2: Lee T-5 (1855-1858) 1957

NO6 Comanche NO6

Hanging by the Heels

could hear distinctly the sound of their voices singing their⁵⁷⁴ savage songs. Presently, came thrilling through the air, ⁷²⁷ mingling with the loud, shrill war whoop, a shriek of mortal agony. Again and again it was repeated, growing fainter and fainter, until, finally, it ceased, or, at least, failed to reach my ears.

At length, a party of six or seven came after me. While⁷²⁷ passing through the 'strange' encampment, I discovered pieces of soldier's clothing, which I recognized at once as the United States uniform. Moving on beyond the camp into a grove, a spectacle presented itself that froze my blood with horror. A white man had been subjected to the torture. He was not lashed to stakes as Stewart and Martin were, but a sharp stick had been thrust through his heel cords, by which he was suspended from a limb, with his head downward, as a butcher suspends a carcass in the shambles.

He, also, had been sacrificed with the accursed flints, his ears cut off, and tongue drawn out. A slight convulsive shrug of the shoulders, indicated that life was not wholly extinct. I gazed upon him in silence and terror and was relieved when they led me away. I concluded, from what I saw in their camp, he was a United States soldier, captured, probably, near one of the frontier outposts—such exploits not being unusual, numbers having been taken during my early residence in Texas, as far down as Fort Jesup in Louisiana.

The Indian policy of the United States, I am convinced,⁶⁴⁸ is not the most advisable one. So long as it is continued, the frontier settlements will be constantly exposed to depredations, and prisoners subjected to the horrid cruelties I have described. They cherish an inveterate and undying hatred of the white race, whom they regard as usurpers—

Three Years Among the Comanches

648 and are sanguine in the belief that the time will eventually arrive when they will be enabled, with the assistance of the Great Spirit, to sweep them from existence and reclaim their rightful inheritance. In their ignorance, they compare, favorably for themselves, their feeble strength with the whole power of the United States.

650 It would be cheaper for the government, in the end, instead of maintaining a line of military posts on the frontier—standing merely on the defensive—to send an army through their territories, giving them ocular demonstrations of its power, arresting their turbulent chiefs, and teaching them a lesson too impressive to be forgotten, that the rights of a citizen of the United States shall not be violated with impunity. Hundreds of our people, in the pursuit of their lawful business, are captured yearly, enslaved, and barbarously put to death, without attracting the attention of government, whereas if the hundredth part of the same outrages were committed by any enlightened nation, it would call upon the people to fly to arms. For my own part, I do not see why the arm of authority should not be stretched forth to protect the outraged citizen at the headwaters of the Guadalupe with the same promptness it is to protect him in Paraguay, or on the Gulf of Mexico.

221 The camp of the Spotted Leopard, as has previously been
241 seen, was situated at the source of the Boge Lescoha, at the foot of a mountain range. Fifty miles south, at the other extremity of the valley, were his planting grounds, where a small village had been constructed, and where a number of the tribe, principally squaws, usually remained.

● 727 I had been here several months when a party arrived from the plantation, among whom I observed were three white women, notwithstanding their faces were painted.

The White Women

The contour of their features, and especially their red hair, 727 ● indicated the race to which they belonged, beyond mistake. At the next festival of the full moon, where all, bond and [796] free, were permitted to mingle and converse, I found, to my surprise, they could speak English. It was the first time since my capture that I had heard the accents of my native tongue. The oldest woman had passed the age of sixty, and her name was Mrs. Marietta Haskins. The two younger were her daughters, the oldest, Margaret, perhaps, twenty-one, the other, Harriet, three years her junior. They appeared to be persons who had been brought up in humble circumstances, though possessing a fair share of intelligence. The following is, substantially, the version of their story.

They were natives of one of the midland counties of ~~000~~ England, where they occupied an obscure, though comfortable position in life. While thus situated, happy and contented with their lot, there came into the vicinity of their residence, one of the Latter-Day Saints, preaching and expounding the Mormon doctrines. His arguments were so ingenious—his appeals so eloquent and earnest—his description of the valley of the Great Salt Lake so glowing that many of the poor people listened and were converted. He represented the climate as more salubrious—the soil more fertile—the scenery more delicious than in any other region of the world. He portrayed, in fascinating colors, the life of ease and luxury the poorest thrall in England might lead in that favored land—where wild herds, the common property of all, darkened a thousand hills, and the bountiful earth yielded its fruits without toil.

The fortunate inhabitants of this paradise he pictured as basking in the full fruition of the highest earthly happiness. Discarding the false, domestic notions to which the wicked

Mrs. Haskins' Story

ing they would be of service on the way, packed their household goods, furnished themselves with provisions, and started through the Indian country toward the distant city of the Great Salt Lake.

They struck the Río Grande at Eagle Pass, pushed onward beyond the futhermost settlements, and for a month were slowly winding among the mountains, when many of their teams began to fail. A party of forty were thus compelled to fall in the rear, and finally became separated from their companions. With this party was the Haskins family.

They now began to be annoyed by the Indians. For several days they had been seen scouring the prairies in different directions, ascertaining, perhaps, the strength and quality of the train. They constantly grew bolder and bolder, in the daytime dashing up within a short distance, and at night driving off more and more of their cattle, until, at length, they were destitute of sufficient force to proceed. In this helpless state, they were surrounded by a cloud of savages, and taken prisoners.

In this party of forty were fourteen women and several young infants. The men, among whom, of course, the husband and father, were massacred without exception, the women less fortunate, and the infants were carried away. I turn with disgust from the contemplation of the cruelty to which these captive women were subjected by the lustful hellhounds as they bore them off in triumph to their camps. Some idea of their barbarous nature may be conceived from the fact that while on the way, when an infant cried, it would be snatched from its mother's breast, a hole cut under its chin, then hung on the point of a broken limb, and there left to linger through its little painful life. In this manner, I was assured by Mrs. Haskins and her daughters, every child unable to comprehend the danger of crying was disposed of.

Three Years Among the Comanches

727 On arriving at a large Indian village, the spoils were divided and distributed among the victors. These women fell into the hands of a chief, who transferred them, a short time after, to the Spotted Leopard. The mother, whose health had broken down under the hardships and sufferings she had endured, was made a common drudge in the camp, while the daughters were appropriated by two burly warriors, and compelled to serve them, both in the capacity of slaves and wives.

When I met with them, they had been with the tribe of the Spotted Leopard between two and three years. In the meantime the mother had grown extremely feeble, and latterly was so afflicted with rheumatism that she was incapable of performing any kind of labor. Of no further service in the camp, there was still enough of life left in her to gratify their thirst for cruelty. Assembling one day outside the town, near the close of my sojourn among them, she was brought forth, stripped, and fastened to the stake. The daughters, likewise, were bound to stakes directly in front of her, so that it was impossible for them to avoid witnessing her agonies.

The same infernal orgies were again gone through with which attended the cruel butchery of Martin and Stewart by the warriors of Big Wolf. Like them, she was first scalped, then cut and hacked with flints, and finally tomahawked, but not until long after life had become extinct. She fainted when the scalp was severed from her head, once or twice revived and screamed, fainting immediately again; and when the final blow was given, it fell upon a corpse! The daughters, likewise, screamed and swooned, and then revived to scream and swoon again; and when the mad rites were ended, were borne back, half-dead, amidst taunts and laughter, to their tents.



Another bargain and sale—Arrival at the village of Rolling Thunder—Uniformity of Indian villages—Euphonious names of Rolling Thunder's wives—Renewal of the covenant of the square stick—The wisest of the wise—Married to To-ma-no-a-ku-no, the Sleek Otter—The Indian duel—Visit to the ruins—Volcanic eruptions—Ancient architecture—The Indian legend—Mounds on the tablelands—Departure for the Grand Council—Incidents by the way—The tragical death of Rolling Thunder.

- 727 The Rolling Thunder was a frequent visitor at our camp, subsequent to the time when he and his tribe accompanied us home from the buffalo hunt. He exhibited a regard for me, and would often fall into a profound revery, when Kianceta, the Weasel, had presented me the watch, and I had caused it to communicate intelligence from the Great Spirit in the usual, rattling offhand manner in which it was accustomed to converse. His interviews with the Spotted Leopard became so long, and, to all appearances, of such vast importance that I had no doubt I was to be subjected to another sale and assignment.

My surmises proved to be entirely correct. Just previous to the time when preparations are made for the annual [361] buffalo hunt, the Spotted Leopard and some of his dis- [484] tinguished warriors, Kianceta, and his other wives, with myself and a considerable drove of pack mules, set off over the mountains in all respect similar to those I had pre-

Arrival at Rolling Thunder's Village

viously crossed, and after a journey of several days, at 727 length entered a large town of, perhaps, two hundred tents, [361] situated in a narrow, but luxuriant valley, over which the [484] thoughtful and sedate Rolling Thunder had the honor to preside. On our arrival, the customary dances were duly performed—the bloody covenant of the square stick was solemnly renewed—the purchase money, consisting of skins and animals, was delivered in due form of savage law—and Kianceta, the Weasel, having braided into my long hair an incredible number of beads, as a parting token of friendship and affection, the Spotted Leopard, followed by his attendants, disappeared from my sight, thank God, forever. [572]

The price paid for me on this occasion, so far as I could judge, exceeded even the price paid on the former sale; my value, in connection with the watch, bearing somewhat the same proportion to that of other, less fortunate captives, as the value of such trotting celebrities as "Ethan Allen," "Flora Temple," and "The Spirit of the Times" does in that of ordinary nags.

A description of one Indian village is, substantially, a [361] description of all others. The same fashion of tents, the [622] same regularity of streets, the same square in the center, characterize them all. The village of Rolling Thunder was situated in a more contracted valley than that of Big Wolf's or the Spotted Leopard's; in other respects it was the same. He had not neglected to take advantage of the privilege appertaining to his patriarchal office; consequently, he, likewise, had gathered into his tents four conjugal companions, whose euphonical names I here mention in the order of their ages. They were *So-waw*, *An-a-wak-ke-o*, *Ho-wawk-ke* [551] *no*, and *Se-ma-naw*, the Wise. The latter took charge of the watch, preserving it with all the care and tenderness that had distinguished her illustrious predecessors, Moko and Kianceta, the Weasel.

Three Years Among the Comanches

000 still remain among the Indians. My own observation, together with the knowledge obtained from the chiefs and warriors of the tribes to which I was so long attached, places the matter beyond dispute, that a large number of white prisoners, principally women, are held by them.

Their situation, above all others, is eminently one deserving the consideration of humane and philanthropic persons. The barbarity and degradation to which they are doomed, render them, truly, especial objects of pity and compassion, and whoever engages to accomplish their deliverance will enter on a work of Christian charity.

If the proper effort were made in the right direction, beyond question, many of them could be rescued. It would not require an armed invasion of the Indian territory; such an invasion, however salutary it might prove in other respects, would in all probability result disastrously to the captive. There is a peaceful and far more economical mode
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439 by which their liberation can be effected, and this is through the instrumentality of the traders.

These compose a privileged class among the savages; are protected rather than injured by them. They are relied upon for their annual supply of knives, hatchets, calico, and trinkets. Arrangements could therefore be made with the traders to purchase the white men and women belonging to the several tribes with which they have intercourse—purchases easily to be negotiated if supplied with the necessary means. In most instances they are without friends, the survivors of emigrant families, attacked and overcome while journeying to the distant West. Bearing always in remembrance the awful scenes of agony and torture it has been my lot to witness, I can never cease to plead with my countrymen to interest themselves in behalf of those who are still in

2: Lee T-5 (1855-1858) 1957

NO6 Comanche NO6

Conclusion

bonds, and subject to the same cruelties; ready, myself, 727 ●
though prematurely old, to devote the remainder of my 439
days, without reward, to the accomplishment of their
ransom.

The Comanches

281 skins soft and flexible no matter how often they were exposed to moisture.

Every woman made the clothing for herself and her family, as was explained in the previous chapter. From the tanned skins the women also made various kinds of soft leather pouches, among them the long fringed ones for the men's smoking utensils. Some of these [531] bags were decorated with beadwork after the arrival of the white traders, but informants insist that porcupine-quill embroidery was unusual among the Comanches.

281 Although every woman learned to make clothing and bags, it seems that there were only a relatively few who became expert at 463 designing and cutting the cover for a tipi. A mother or wife who wanted to make a tipi gathered the poles, stripped them of their bark and pared them down to the desired size, and possibly pointed the butts. She then most likely went to an expert tipi-maker and asked for her help. She might offer her a present then, or it might be given afterwards. A day for the work was agreed upon. Other women would be invited to join the "quilting party," but the expert was in complete charge and gave the instructions. She usually did the most critical cutting and fitting. During the day the hostess provided her guests with a feast. Although the women worked together, there appears to have been no organization of tipi makers.²

492 Since the Comanches spent much of their time on horseback, horse equipage was an important item. Although both men and [463] women worked at it, saddle-making tended to be the specialty of men who were no longer active in war. In later times, however, Mexican captives became specialists at the trade. Saddles were mostly of a [727] modified Spanish type. They were generally made of American elm in three pieces: the bars or seat proper, the pommel, and the cantle. Each part was laboriously shaved down into the desired shape and carefully fitted. The pommel and cantle were made high with but slight pitch; the bars or seat were moderate in length so that the saddle was deep and narrow. Holes were drilled with a red hot awl, the joints daubed with glue, and then the parts were laced firmly together by means of green deer sinew. The joints were scraped and rubbed smooth, and the frame was smeared with an ochre paint. Over

² Informants: Kills Something; She Invites Her Relatives.

At Work and Play

"A spear is a big responsibility." A warrior returning from a successful raiding party set his lance upright before the door of his lodge with the scalps of his victims dangling from it. No one except the owner could remove the trophies.²¹ As in the case of the shield, tradition records that some lances had power, and the lance carried by the leaders was a characteristic sign of office. 411 554 [527] 718]

The Talley Sheet of Governor Anza reveals five Comanche groups, the leader of each having a lance which represented the rank of his group.²² Robert H. Lowie asserts that the major difference in the several societies lay in the dances prior to assembling a war party and that each society had a lance and shield symbolical of a very definite position.²³ There is a possibility that straight lances may have been carried by one rank and hooked lances by another, but there seems to be no definite pattern. Both straight and hooked lances were carried with point upward.

Another weapon used by the Comanches was the war club or battle axe, called *wapitapu'ni*. Made of a flint stone weighing about two pounds, it was about six inches long and three inches wide on one end, tapering off to a width of from one to two inches on the other. Each end was thinned to a rough edge. The middle of the flint was grooved or thinned on either side to prevent it from slipping on the handle. The wooden handle was fourteen to sixteen inches in length and from one to one and one-half inches in diameter. One end was split, and into this incision the axe was inserted and fastened to the handle by thongs of green or wet rawhide wrapped around the flint and handle about half a dozen times. The ends of the rawhide were made fast by means of small wooden pegs passed through the rawhide and into the wooden handle. The rawhide contracted in drying and left the axe handle almost as firmly bound as a modern axe and handle. The battle axe served a number of purposes and at close range was a deadly weapon. 411

Despite their strenuous life, the Comanches found time for recreation and entertainment. Their diversions, like their industries, were 517

²¹ Zoe A. Tilghman, *Quanah, The Eagle of the Comanches*, 16.

²² Alfred B. Thomas, "An Eighteenth Century Comanche Document," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. XXXI (1929), 291-92.

²³ *Ibid.*, 293-95, quoting R. H. Lowie, "Notes on Shoshonean Ethnography," *American Museum of Natural History Anthropological Papers*, XX (1924), 283.

The Comanches

567 of trade, and poverty-stricken Shoshones often sold their children to
[422] their more prosperous Comanche cognates.

641 Some captives became naturalized, free members of the tribe, even
[727] respected warriors. The changed status was recognized by a solemn
ceremony only after the Comanches felt they ran no risk by such
a step. According to the customary procedure, the pipe was passed
around the council circle. After smoking, all stood up, each placing
his right hand over the heart, then raising it toward the sun, repeating
the process while marching around the circle. Then the captive was
led before the chief to take the oath, wherein he promised faithfully
to perform all the duties of a Comanche warrior, to help provide for,
protect, and obey the chief in all things in both peace and war. The
person taking the oath was then given a Comanche name and was
required to select a family and be adopted by a brother.

422 Objects of material culture were personally owned, but the test
of ownership was not production so much as use. Clothing was made,
424 for example, by the women, but was owned by the person who wore it.
The medicine formula was privately owned, but could be transferred.
War honors were a sort of property which might on occasion be
transferred, but rather as a mark of esteem and not for economic
consideration. Objects jointly used, like the tipi, were usually con-
sidered to be the property of the husband.

428 At the time the Comanches were confined upon the reservation,
their practices in regard to inheritance were in a chaotic condition.
Apparently the whole problem of inheritance was so new to their
culture that no established norms had evolved. The Plateau tribes
from whom the Comanches had separated themselves when they en-
tered the plains were accustomed to destroy all a man's property at
his death. This included clothing, weapons, saddles, tools, war para-
phernalia, and horses customarily ridden by the deceased, and in
ancient times even the wife. In the early days, the Comanches also
sometimes killed the favorite wives of a deceased warrior. Articles of
intimate personal use were buried with the corpse; other less im-
portant articles were burned. This destruction entailed few hardships
and no serious economic loss, since the property was limited to cloth-
ing and a few weapons and utensils. When the Comanches acquired
horses, inheritance became a serious problem. To slaughter the entire

The Comanches

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nition of his deed. Other than securing witnesses or presenting circumstantial evidence in support of his claim, he might take a formal oath that what he claimed was true. It is evident that in the confusion of battle a man might believe himself entitled to honors claimed by others. At the first opportunity after the fight, the chief called the warriors together, preferably before they arrived at the main camp.¹ But the procedure varied from band to band and according to circumstances. One account has the leading warriors seat themselves in a semicircle. Near the opening of the circle was placed a buffalo hide. Some of the Indians danced to the beat of drums. A warrior rode into the circle, stopped suddenly, and plunged his spear in the buffalo hide. Music and dancing stopped, and the warrior under oath narrated in detail the circumstances connected with the deed which he claimed as a coup. When he had finished, he dismounted and joined his comrades in the semicircle, and the dancing and drumming were renewed. Then a second warrior was called upon. The same procedure was continued until each claimant for honors had told his story. Those seated in the semicircle either publicly recognized the deed as a coup or rejected the claim.

A scout who was out alone sometimes ran unexpectedly into an enemy, perhaps killing or counting coup on one. In such a situation there was no one to witness his deed; it was necessary for him to attest its truth. If he was a member of the Water Horse band, he did so by taking the buffalo-chip oath. On returning to the band, he signaled that he had important news. Before entering the camp, he waited for all the warriors to assemble. They all lined up in a row behind three or four buffalo chips, which were stacked on end, tipi wise. When they were ready, the scout rode in and speared a chip for each man he had killed or struck. With each blow he cried, "A:he!" If he had counted no coup, he merely walked around the pile and then scattered it as a sign that the news he was bringing was true. The false asseveration of a coup brought bad luck and death.

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The Comanches recognized two coups struck on the same victim by different persons. Subsequent coups received no credit. The Cheyennes counted coup on an enemy three times, while the Arapahos touched four times. In battle, members of one tribe counted coup

¹ Informant: Yellowfish.

Warfare

off the horses, if possible unnoticed by the enemy, whose attention was distracted at the time. While the riders continued to draw the attention of the enemy, the dismounted warriors slipped silently to a position from which they could strike a mortal blow.¹⁴ Another plan of strategy was to take up a position in a creek valley where there was a thicket of bushes and stunted trees and where the low, steep banks of a meandering stream afforded a measure of protection. In such a place their concealment was so complete that it would have been difficult to believe any Indians were there had it not been for the twang of a bowstring or the swish of an arrow. In such a position they were known to have fought without giving or asking quarter until there was not one left to bend a bow. 725

When a comrade was killed or wounded, the Comanches endeavored to retrieve his body or carry him to safety if he were still living. Two Indians riding abreast, one on each side of the prostrate warrior, would reach down and take hold of the warrior as they passed, either dragging him to safety or swinging him up beside one of them. If he could not be removed by mounted comrades, he was sometimes lassoed and dragged to a spot where he could be recovered. 726

To the white man the Comanche appeared to be a cruel, savage warrior. But in all fairness it must be remembered that he knew nothing of the white man's code of war and his so-called humanity. He could not take many prisoners for the simple reason that he had no prison to hold them and perhaps no food to sustain them. He killed the men, took the women when he could, and adopted into the tribe children who were too young to run away. His courage was superb. Since he gave no quarter, he asked none in return. Sometimes, when the fight became desperate, a warrior dismounted and took off his moccasins in token of his resolve never to retreat.¹⁵ Even when surrounded, with no hope of escape, he always refused to surrender and fought as long as any strength remained in his body. 727

Although it was not their custom to torture unfortunate enemies, at times when the Comanches became unusually angered, they resorted to extreme forms of barbarism in seeking revenge. For the most part, the treatment an individual captive received depended on

¹⁴ R. I. Dodge, *The Plains of the Great West*, 380, 381.

¹⁵ Informant: Face Wrinkling Like Getting Old.

The Comanches

727 the personal character of his captor. Slope knew of a man who regularly castrated his boy captives, crucified one prisoner, and killed a Navaho because the victim was diseased. Adopted captives who became warriors are reputed by the Comanches to have been more cruel than the Comanches themselves. The father-in-law of Breaks Something was adopted, and it is said that he more than once threw captured babies into the air to catch them on his spear. Rhoda Greyfoot's father, the feared medicine man, turned loose the first Mexican boy he took to tend his horses, "because it was too much trouble teaching him the language." Thereafter he let his captives go or gave them away. On one occasion, when a war party of Comanches surprised a small group of Tonkawas roasting a Comanche warrior preparatory to a ceremonial meal, they scalped the Tonkawas, amputated their arms and legs, cut out their tongues, and threw the mangled bodies of both living and dead upon the campfire, piled more wood on the fire, and while the victims moaned for mercy as the grease and blood ran from their cracking bodies, they danced around the fire.¹⁶

Although most accounts of the Comanches are filled with stories of the atrocities they committed, these wandering nomads of the plains often revealed kinder aspects of behavior. They had great admiration for any white who exhibited bravery in combat with them and always spoke with great praise of such men afterwards. Those captives whom they admired and who accepted their way of life were treated usually with great consideration and received a liberal share of anything their captors might possess.

In 1933 there lived with her seventy-five-year-old daughter, not far from Indianhoma, Oklahoma, a remarkable old woman of ninety years. She was Carrying Her Sunshade. She was a Comanche captive who had been taken from her home in old Mexico in the eighteen fifties, when she was a little girl of six or seven. The rest of her long life had been lived as a Comanche, and at fifteen she had borne her first child, the daughter who seventy-five years later was still living a hale and hearty existence with her mother. A fragment of the old woman's autobiography as taken by the Hoebels offers a first-hand account of personal experience of a Comanche captive

¹⁶ Lehmann, *op. cit.*, 156.

Warfare

“ “ “ My former home was near the highest mountain in Mexico. I do not remember my parents' names or who they were. 727●

The Comanches were raiding our country from the top of that mountain. They had already taken some of my friends when they came down to the school one day. They rode around the school on horses and threw firebrands into it. As the children ran out, they snatched them up and carried them off. The teacher they killed. It was the custom of the Indians to cache their stuff up on that mountain when on a raid; also to leave their captives up there when out gathering more.

I was captured in the summer by a war leader, Tȳȳp, who was himself a captive—it's funny they had no pity on their own people. I was sitting in my grandmother's arms on a log outside our house. An Indian came and pushed our fence down. He rode up, grabbed me from my grandmother's arms and put me behind him on his horse. I was the only one in my family who was captured, for my parents were gone that day.

When it was nearly night, we joined up with some Indians. They came on a boy sheepherder, whom they killed, and they ate his lunch. Then they rode on toward the high mountain. It was a four-day trip, and when they ran out of food, they killed a horse. When we finally got there, it was raining hard, and I went to bed soaked. As soon as we had entered the camp, other Indians had run up and snatched off my earrings and clothes for souvenirs. Other little captive girls told me not to be afraid. "They won't really hurt you," they said.

The next morning the sound of a wagon moving at the foot of the mountain was heard. Four men were sent down to see about it. Then we heard shots. After a while the scouts came back, bringing some food and Mexican blankets. I knew from this that they had killed some more Mexicans.

It was a big camp there on the mountain, and we stayed there quite some time while the Comanches made some more raids about the country. They didn't seem to be the least bit afraid. We captive girls had to eat by ourselves so we would not disturb the men's medicine.

On the last raid, all the Comanches went, including the women. They left all us captive children in charge of one man, himself a captive. He cooked a whole horse for us, and we ate as much as we could.

The Comanches

- 727 When the raiding party returned with more horses, they all got ready to go back north. It was probably in September.

Each family camp left when it got ready, driving off its own bunch of horses. Tȳɔp, my captor, had about thirty people in his camp. He was not satisfied with his horses; he wished to capture more; so his bunch stayed behind. Everybody had gone, but a man named *Wahaɔmɔ* came back to get something. As he rode by me, Tȳɔp said to him, "We are going on another raid. This girl is in the way, so we are going to kill her."

Wahaɔmɔ felt sorry for me. He thought of his own children; his wife was dead. So he picked me up and put me on his mule. He gave Tȳɔp a few arrows, and Tȳɔp gave him three blankets, plus one for me to ride on.

- [839] On the route we passed a girl lying in the road about to die; she had been raped. Later we passed a boy captive—dead.

Wahaɔmɔ told me no harm would come to me. "When you grow up, you'll be my wife," he said. His wife was dead and his niece was running his camp for him. He told his niece to be good to me (sometimes the women were very mean to captives); he told her to look after me so no men would harm me.

- [839] One night when we were camping and my captor was out looking after his horses, a young brave came along and pulled me out there against my will. He lay down and exposed himself, and I saw he had a diseased scrotum. I didn't do anything. I just stood around.

Then my captor saw me and ran to me. He scolded that fellow and took me back to camp. After that he always took me along when he went places. I was tied on a horse, and he led me with him.

We were still traveling when we came to a camp of Kiowas. *Wahaɔmɔ* sent his niece and me to get some food; we were pretty short of it. He dressed me in a blanket and painted my face. We looked for the largest lodge and went there.

"Are you a warrior's wife?" they asked.

"No," I told them, "I'm only a captive."

Those Kiowas loaded us up with dried meat. They also told us there was a large Comanche camp not far away. When we got there, we found the fires still smoking at the old camp place, but they were gone.

Warfare

All the next day we followed their trail until we came upon them at dusk. It was the main Comanche camp that my captor had been seeking; his wife's parents were there. I noticed that their hair, and that of his sister, was already long. He must have been gone on this raid for several years. 727●

He led me into their tipi—all fixed up with blankets—and he bade me sit down at the west side (my regular place was next to the door). The women of the family struck me with whips, as was the custom on the arrival of a new captive in camp.

My job was to care for his children. The little crippled one I had [732] to carry on my back; the other one I led about. Wherever they went to play, I had to go with them.

Wahamō slept regularly with his former wife's younger sister, *Puki*.

That winter a party left on a hunting trip to get some more meat. In their absence we had trouble keeping the horses. A big snow storm came up and completely buried some horses. In the main camp we were short of wood and food. The captive boys had to dig paths in the snow and dig for frozen horses for us to eat. They fed the living horses cottonwood shoots; the bark is good food, but it was frozen and cut the horses' mouths. After the horses had eaten the bark, the captive boys brought in the twigs for fuel.

The hunting party was out for nearly a month on account of the storm. They lost many horses, and they nearly starved to death. Still, they brought back a little meat. The people out on the party invented snowshoes made of woven sinews. One man on snowshoes shot an animal with an arrow, and when he ran up to it, he slid right past it. Others borrowed his snowshoes, because they didn't have enough sinew to make shoes for all the hunters. [481]

That was a hard winter.

Wahamō taught me to hunt during the next spring. He had not yet married me. He was just kind to me. His wife would take a stick out of the fire and poke it at me out of jealousy to scare me and make me cry, but her step-children would help me against her.

By the fall of the second year I knew the language and was familiar with the customs. » » »

The Comanches

727 Captive white children were generally initiated into the tribe by a series of terrifying experiences in which the Indians tried their courage by brutal treatment and threats of destruction. They would sometimes be tied to a stake while their captors, with slashes and menacing gestures, punctuated by hideous yells, threatened to cut them to pieces, shoot them, or even burn them at the stake. Some of these unfortunate children never lived to recount their experiences. If the victim survived the initiation to the satisfaction of his captors, he became a slave and was compelled to do menial tasks, like Carrying Her Sunshade. If he proved his mettle according to Comanche standards, better days awaited him. He would likely be adopted as a member of a chief's or warrior's family. Later he was permitted to take part in raids and battles. If he proved a brave fighter, he might become an honored and respected warrior and rise to any position open to a natural-born Comanche. The captives, mostly Mexicans, who did not become warriors tended the horse herds and practiced such specialized industries as gun repairing and saddle-making. The captive woman who made a dutiful and faithful wife and the captive man who had won war honors were sometimes publicly honored.¹⁷ Ordinarily the Comanches refused to surrender a captive without the payment of a reward. Some of the more responsible chiefs tried to stop the taking of white women and children as captives, and some went so far as to buy captives from other Comanches and liberate them. Some of the most hardened warriors are known to have wept because a captive of whom they had become fond returned to his own people.

574 All the accounts agree that a Comanche felt obligated to lodge, entertain, protect, and feed, even to his last morsel, any person, regardless of nationality, even though it might be his bitterest enemy, who happened to ask for lodging.

726 When a Comanche raiding or war party found itself hard pressed
202 by an enemy force too large to resist, or if it feared pursuit, it divided and subdivided its forces until each fleeing warrior left a separate trace and pursuers found it impossible to follow the trail. Scattered Comanches were adept in communicating with one another through means of signals. After a night raid when the warriors knew them-

¹⁷ Linton, "The Comanche Sun Dance," *loc. cit.*, 421; Burnet, "American Aborigines, Indians of Texas," *loc. cit.*, Vol. I (May 22, 1824), 163.

The Comanches

726 horses that fell behind were abandoned. No time was lost hunting for food. If necessary, old horses were killed and consumed. Captives who retarded the speed of the retreat might be abandoned or killed. To avoid surprise, they stopped to rest for only an hour or two and then moved on again, making three or four such stops within a day. To discourage pursuit, they would take a route on which they knew there was no water. When they became very thirsty, they killed horses and drank the blood. The meager supply of water carried in buffalo paunches was rationed, well guarded, and conserved for the children and women when they were along, or for wounded warriors. Clinton Smith declares that on one occasion the warriors did without water until their throats became too swollen for them to swallow readily.²¹

After an engagement or a stealthy garnering of horses, the leader and war-bonnet wearers covered the escape with rear-guard actions. The leader designated two men to remain on fast horses some distance behind, yet close enough to signal, in order to watch the back trail. They sometimes set fire to the grass to blot out their trail against both men and dogs, or they emptied pouches of skunk musk on the trail to prevent dogs from following in pursuit. After the advent of the white trader, the rear-guard scouts carried field glasses.²²

1727 When raiders had put two or three days of safety between themselves and possible pursuers, they halted. They needed rest and the wounded required attention. In most cases there were spoils to be divided, and the division was made as soon as convenient. The leader's eyes had been open to industry, willingness, and bravery. He noted or was soon told of the actions of his followers while in battle. Unless previously agreed otherwise, to the man who had excelled he allowed first choice of the horses to be divided. Each member of the party chose in turn according to his services as determined by the chief, the cook usually having high priority. The leader took his pick of what remained. The succession of choices was repeated in the same order as before. A reputation for fairness in dividing the spoils enhanced the prestige of a war leader and gained him followers. Liberality was

²¹ *Ibid.* 40.

²² Informant: Yellowfish, see also Hoebel, *The Political Organization and Law-Ways of the Comanche Indians*, 25; C. and J. D. Smith, *op. cit.*, 34, 39, 40.

²³ Linton, *The Study of Man*, 142-43.

Warfare

one of the surest forms of insurance against ill fortune, for where one had given he could legitimately expect a return. 727 ●

In theory the leader could retain as much of the loot for himself as he wished.²³ Actually, leaders rarely kept more than a small share for themselves and often gave all the loot to their followers. Success in war, with its attendant spoils, was believed to be due to the leader's medicine, that is, his supernatural powers. Such power came and went capriciously, and its presence was revealed to a man by a subjective reaction which he could immediately recognize. If the leader kept the bulk of the spoils, that act was tantamount to a confession that he felt his power was waning. He was keeping what he could, because he knew that he might not be able to get more. The selfish leader was likely to lose prestige and have difficulty in recruiting his next war party. If he gave freely, it showed that he knew his medicine was strong. It is said that Quanah Parker, the last great Comanche chief, was not always liberal toward his followers; he frequently made favorites of his relatives and took the best horses for himself. Some of the warriors refused to go on raids with him for this reason.²⁴ If a man on a raid was killed before the spoils were divided, his heirs were not included in the division, but if he had personally taken any horses singlehanded, they were supposed to be turned over to his family.

About the time of the Civil War, when the cattlemen were pushing westward beyond the line of settlements across Texas into the Comanche country, Texas cattle became an important article of plunder. Stolen cattle were exchanged for goods with the *Comancheros*, or traders from New Mexico. Cattle constituted a commodity easily procured and transported, and they could be obtained in almost unlimited numbers. The Comanches felt that if only the raiders could succeed in driving off enough of the intruders' cattle, it would discourage further encroachment into their country. There were regular meeting places where traders with their cart-loads of commodities met the Comanches to trade for horses and cattle. So abundant was the trade that it was reported in 1867 that the territory of New Mexico was "filled with Texas cattle."²⁵ In exchange for these cattle the Co-

²⁴ Informants: Post Oak Jim; Whitewolf.

²⁵ A. B. Norton (superintendent Indian Affairs, New Mexico) to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 24, 1867, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1867, 194-95.

The Comanches

- 727 manches received ammunition, knives, calico, coffee, arrow points, tobacco, whiskey, and gewgaws. An idea of the enormous extent of this trade may be gained from the fact that in 1867 Charles Goodnight found six hundred head of his cattle, which had been stolen sometime before from his range near old Fort Belknap, on Gallinas Creek in New Mexico. He was firmly convinced that at least three hundred thousand head of Texas cattle had been stolen and sold or traded to New Mexicans during the Civil War. A later and more conservative estimate by another Texas ranchman set the loss for the two decades preceding 1873 at one hundred thousand head.²⁶ Most of these cattle were driven to New Mexico by the Comanches and their Kiowa allies. The most active band of Comanches engaged in plundering cattle was the Antelope of the *Llano Estacado*.

- 727 If a returning war or raiding party had been unsuccessful, it was customary to bury those who died on the road. They laid the deceased in a crevice or shallow grave and piled rocks over it to prevent the corpse's being disturbed by predatory animals. The warriors separated upon approaching the main camp and, with their faces painted black and the tails of their horses shaved, dropped into it one by one quietly and without fanfare. If several warriors had been lost, the entire camp broke forth in a pandemonium of wailing; recent captives were in danger of being abused, tortured, or slain; violence and frenzy reigned supreme. The female relatives of slain Indians were expected to evidence their grief by shrill lamentations and self-torture, continuing the demonstrations for weeks, months, and even years. They cut their legs and arms and cut off finger tips and hair, painted their faces black, and piled ashes on their heads. Usually they tore down the tipis of the dead warriors and destroyed or gave away their property. "A war leader will always comfort the survivors of a casualty on his party," said Post Oak Jim, "and will sometimes give them a horse or other gift."

A successful returning party timed its arrival so as to enter the village during the morning hours; they halted on an elevation a short distance from the village and sent a messenger ahead to inform the

²⁶ J. E. Haley, *The XIT Ranch of Texas*, 26; C. C. Rister, *The Southwestern Frontier*, 82, n.73.

Warfare

people. It was usually one of the youngest members of the party who carried the good news. 727●

While waiting for the people in camp to make ready for the occasion, the victorious warriors put on their war paint and war dress. The horses were rubbed with grass so as to look their best. The death of a warrior after he had counted coup did not prevent the celebration, for it was considered an honor for a person to count coup first and afterwards be killed in the same fight. His relatives joined in the dance. When the people learned that the party had returned, they were greatly excited and expressed their exultation with shouts and yells. All was joy in the village. The women sang songs of victory as they went forth to greet the returning heroes. An elderly, respected woman, carrying a long lance or a slender scalp pole, might lead the parade to meet the warriors, and the victorious warriors might honor her by fastening their scalps to her lance or pole. On other occasions the leader of the party was allowed the honor of being scalp bearer. At other times, it would be the member of the party who had most distinguished himself on the raid. But more often, each warrior was permitted the honor of flourishing his own scalp pole. The scalps were tied to the point end of the lance, and the latter was held with scalps up as they rode into camp. In the absence of a lance, a tomahawk would serve. He who had achieved the greatest success in the raid was entitled to tie the scalp lock on which he had taken first coup to the lower lip of his horse. This signified disdain for the enemy.

The scalp when taken might be small, only a little larger than a silver dollar, but like any piece of fresh skin it stretched greatly. Many Comanches preferred, however, to take the whole skin of the head. The preparation of the scalp took place as soon after it was taken as convenient, the same day if possible. Preparation was a ceremonial procedure, and young warriors who had never before scalped an enemy were taught to prepare the scalp under supervision. Smoke was made and a prayer offered to the spiritual powers before the work on the scalp itself was begun. The flesh was shaved from the skin. A willow twig was secured and bent into a hoop, somewhat larger than the scalp, and the ends were lashed together with a sinew. The margin of the cleaned scalp was then sewed to the hoop, the sinew threads being pulled taut in order to stretch the scalp. The proper

The Comanches

727 procedure in sewing was from east to south, to west, to north, to east, or in the same direction in which a Comanche entered a tipi. The hair was oiled and combed, and the scalp-loop attached to a slender pole. The other end of the pole was stuck in the ground and the scalp was allowed to dry. Lances, tomahawks, and shields were sometimes used instead of poles.

With the scalp poles high, so all could see, the warriors led the parade into the village. The leader and any other person receiving special recognition led the way. Behind them were those who had shown the greatest courage, counted coups, or performed creditable acts. The remaining warriors came next. On both sides and in the rear were the relatives, friends, and other villagers, who had come forth shouting, yelling, and dancing. They sang songs in which they mentioned the names of their favorite heroes. On entering the village, the warriors turned off as they came to their own lodges, turned their horses and weapons over to a wife, mother, or sister, and went inside to rest and prepare for the big Victory Dance.

727 When there were scalps it was a Scalp Dance; if only plunder and
535 captives had been taken, it was a Victory Dance. There was little difference except for the presence of the scalps. The dance was likely to continue all night, and when the victory had been a brilliant one, dancing and feasting were apt to be kept up for several days.

These dances varied from band to band, and even within the same village, but certain characteristics were evident in all. The dance took place in the center of the village in the evening following the return of the successful war party. The villagers put up a large pole in the center of the dance circle. The scalps were attached to the pole. Wood was gathered and stacked in a conical pile with dry grass beneath, so it could be easily fired. The fire was lighted after dark when the singers and drummers, old or middle-aged, had arrived and seated themselves near the scalp pole. Both men and women painted and dressed for the occasion. Black was the predominating color for women; red for men. Men entitled to wear war bonnets donned them. The men and women dancers at times formed in lines facing each other, each line dancing forward and backward; a moment later they formed a circle, dancing around the scalp pole and the musicians. At intervals the spectators joined in the singing.

Warfare

Captives were bound and placed in the center of the circle, possibly tied to the scalp pole. Frequently one of the dancers left his position and in pantomime killed and scalped the captive. Sometimes captives were tortured by the dancers, even to death. When the dance began, the singing was low and the dancers moved in a slow to moderate pace, but as it continued, the pace was accelerated and the singing grew louder. The dance continued from two hours to two or more days, but normally terminated before the light of day.²⁷ 127 ● 535

The contemporary Comanche Brush Dance still retains some of the features of the old Scalp Dance.

In 1933, at a Brush Dance put on by *Mamskə*, the men and women danced back and forth in the old way before a tall pole on which Old Glory flew.

"That used to be a pole for scalps. At sunset we will bring down the flag," they said. "The man who brings down the flag has to be a good warrior. He has to tell about a coup first."

In each Comanche band there was a dance whip-holder. His whip was a wood blade with a serrated edge, and upon it were carved scalp symbols for the owner's victims. At the end of the whip were two short otter-skin lashes. In the old days there were one or two of these, owned by the bravest men in the band. 293

At any dance, the owner of the whip, which is called *pian3'əpai'i* (big whip), may stop the dance and recite a coup, ending his recital with a sun curse upon himself in testimony of its truth. He is a kind of master of ceremonies at the dance. He can dance up to any lounging spectator and point his whip. That person has to jump right in and dance—or be whipped.

Sometimes a warrior who could not dance for certain reasons wished to be excused; nevertheless, when the whip was pointed, he had to get up and dance. Then he could recite his strongest deed. The whip wielder next countered with his. If his deed was as good as the warrior's, the brave had to dance the rest of the time; if not,

²⁷ This account of the return of a successful party is compiled from statements by informants Yellowfish, Face Wrinkling Like Getting Old, and See How Deep the Water Is; also, Nystel, "Three Months among the Indians," *loc. cit.*, 38; Gregg, *op. cit.*, 436; Lee, *op. cit.*, 150; R. I. Dodge, *Our Wild Indians*, 359-60; Möllhausen, *op. cit.*, I, 184; Hoebel, *The Political Organization and Law-Ways of the Comanche Indians*, 27-28.

The Comanches

- 1727 then the brave was excused, and the whip owner had to dance himself.
535 On the fourth day of *Mamskə's* Brush Dance in 1933 Ralph Linton was adopted into the tribe. In a simple ceremony his war record (World War I) was praised and he was named *Ekaḡusa*, Red Buffalo, the buffalo who had so much power that he had thrown the Comanche "witch" up to the moon with a toss of his horns. She can be seen there yet. And then in a touching tribute and climax *Pine-dapoi*, the Whip Owner, stepped forward and, placing his whip in the hands of Ralph Linton, announced that he was relinquishing it to a younger and greater warrior.

In pre-reservation days successful raiders who reached the village with many horses sometimes gave a part or all of them away. A young man who was courting a girl might drive all his horses to her father's lodge and leave them there. A young warrior who had gained high distinction while on the warpath was likely to be serenaded upon his return. On the morning after the Scalp or Victory Dance, young maidens of the camp dressed like warriors. They congregated before the young man's tipi to do the Shakedown Dance and sing the songs. The boy and his father knew why they were there. They were paying honor to the young warrior, and it was customary to present gifts to the serenaders in return. The boy's father, proud of his son's exploits, came out and gave horses to the girls. Later, when the boy had accumulated a supply of horses, he made the gifts himself.

- 701 Military fraternities did not become a developed and integrated
554 part of Comanche culture to the extent that they did among other tribes of the plains. Most of the Comanche warrior groups appear to have been informal organizations compounded of mutual friendship and interests, and they were not continuous or permanent. Although not formally organized into an association, the wearers of full-feathered war bonnets formed a special class, called war leaders, similar to top-ranking military men in our own society in wartime.

The buffalo-scalp-bonnet wearers were of a lower order. The buffalo-scalp hat was decorated with a row of eagle feathers. The breast feathers were tied about the bottom of the quill and reached down to the waist of the wearer. At the top of the buffalo scalp was a bunch of magpie feathers set back on the center of the head. The bonnet was assumed and worn by any brave, not necessarily a chief,

On the Reservation

cutting, as did the other tribes. The Comanches followed the Kiowa practice of delegating the honor to a captive woman who had been faithful to her captor husband. This was but one of the ways of integrating the alien members into the tribal whole. 648X
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[727]
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The ritual of raising the center pole with three false starts before hoisting it into place was done in the common Plains manner. A freshly killed and stuffed buffalo was mounted on the center pole. It is significant that in the crisis of the disappearing herds the Comanches in formulating their Sun Dance placed more than usual emphasis upon the bison.

On the last day of preparation, a scout was sent out to locate a "herd," and on the evening of the fourth day it was announced that it had been located. The Sun Dance proper began with an impounding of the buffalo. Four brave warriors went out some distance from the camp disguised as buffalo. One of them wore the robe of a mangy old bull. An especially outstanding warrior, carrying a bow and a torch, set forth to find them. In time, he found the herd and drove it back to the camp and into the dance lodge, just as used to be done with the old-time corral. Then the dancing could begin.

There were two other bits of dramatic by-play that took place on the fourth day of preparation and thus preceded the hunt. One of them provided comic relief, and the other provided an important bit of symbolism, as did the buffalo hunt. The first of these was the invasion of the clowns, or Mud Men (*sekwitsit puhitsit*). Here was something the Comanches had almost certainly picked up in their visits to the Pueblos, possibly at Taos where they were not infrequently peaceful visitors. This they grafted on to their version of the Sun Dance. The Comanche clowns were "masked" dancers akin to the *koshare* of the Eastern Pueblos. They prepared themselves by the creek, smearing their hair, faces, and bodies with mud. On their heads they wore willow-leaf "helmets" that hung down to their shoulders like semi-masks. About their bodies they wore leaves. On their visages they built up large noses of mud, and each carried a club of willow withes and a wicker shield made of the same material. [177]
574]

Mounting their mud-bedaubed ponies, they charged into the camp, swatting people with their "clubs," chasing dogs about, and generally acting funny. People who were whipped could not remonstrate; they

¹[i.e., of cutting the Sun Dance center pole. -Avalyst]

and the erection of the lodge and the last four to the dance proper. When⁷⁹⁶ the medicine man had selected a place for the dance, invitations were sent out to the various bands. Informants knew of no formality attending this. The bands moved to the place by easy stages, always making four over night halts en route. The camp was pitched in a semi-circle about the site^[631] chosen for the lodge. The members of each band camped together, but the bands had no regular order in the circle.

When the camp has assembled, gathering of materials for the lodge was⁷⁹⁶ begun. Cottonwood was used for the posts and brush covering and either³⁴⁶ cottonwood or cedar for the screen inside the lodge. Men and women went out together to cut the smaller posts and brush. They wore wreaths of sage and joked and sang. When the materials had been cut they were tied to ropes and hauled back by groups of men on foot. These men usually halted four times on their way back to rest and sing.

The cutting and transportation of the center pole was left until the⁷⁹⁶ last. There seems to have been no ceremony attending its selection. It was³⁴⁶ cut, in various instances, by a virtuous Comanche woman (i.e., one who had⁷²⁷ always been faithful to her husband), a virtuous captive woman, and a captive man who had a number of war deeds to his credit. Although informants could give no explanation of these selections, the use of captives for this important office probably reflects their importance in the social and economic life of the tribe. The Comanche captives, who were mostly^[463] Mexicans, tended the horse herds and practiced most of the specialized industries such as gun repairing and saddle making. They were also encouraged to accompany their masters on war parties and, if brave fighters, could rise to any position open to a full blood. The captive woman who was faithful to her master or the captive man who had won war honors had behaved in a commendable way and deserved to be honored by the whole society.

The center pole itself was a tree trunk about fourteen feet long and one⁷⁹⁶ foot in diameter with a fork at the upper end. After it had been felled and³⁴⁶ peeled, it was carried bodily to the site of the lodge, twenty-five or thirty⁴⁸³ men bearing it by means of ropes passed under it. The bearers were changed frequently so that everyone would have a chance to help. Four stops were always made en route.

The construction of the lodge was never begun until all the materials⁷⁹⁶ were on the spot. The center pole was erected first, being planted in a hole³⁴⁶ two to three feet deep. The upper end was supported and guided by means of a forked sapling. Three unsuccessful attempts were made to lift it, it being set on the fourth attempt. At each attempt the medicine man blew

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855 tion for the parents to make a munificent return gift, preferably with a horse, and for the child to give away the original gifts to less fortunate children. This child wore especially fine clothes, rarely had any work to do, was spoiled by everyone, could order his or her siblings and even parents around at will, was never forced into marriage, and was generally cock o' the walk. Such a child [595] was usually the offspring of the father's favorite wife (a wealthy man nearly always had several wives), so that jealousy usually was present among the other wives too, and they would neglect and annoy the favorite child whenever they thought they could get away with it. However, if the child were a boy, he would fairly soon start going off on war-parties, while a girl, not having her marriage arranged for the convenience of the parents, would probably marry [158] a man of some means and reputation, and move away also. It should be noted that favorite children never became *pu'ku'ci?*,¹¹ according to our informants.

Girls who were not favorites frequently had their marriages arranged for them by their fathers. While the girl was anxious to marry a glamorous warrior, the father preferred a poor but industrious man who would stay around the home and tend his stock for him, perhaps for two or three years or, with the inducement of additional daughters as rewards for good and continued service, [127] almost indefinitely. A captive (especially a Mexican) made the most dependent, and hence reliable, son-in-law of all, though the lowered prestige of the [554] resultant half-Comanche grandchildren was a deterrent to this practice.

Adoption of children was fairly common, especially for boys into families 597 without any; in this case, they might become "favorite children." Proper [835] relationship terms for a son or daughter were applied; rigorous incest regulations did not hold with adopted children, but there was strong disapproval of marriage of adoptive siblings if they had been brought up together for a number of years. Close friends of sons might also be adopted when comparatively mature; marriage with them does not seem to have been so clearly outlawed though no cases are recorded. In connection with the early maturity and independence of boys, it is interesting to note that this type of adoption was considered to be solely a matter to be arranged between the boy and his prospective new family—his parents had no influence in the arrangements. There is some evidence that fairly immediate descendants of adopted children were, if possible, married to bona fide members of the family in order to get them more firmly grafted onto the family tree. While the fact that the child was not a blood relative was never forgotten, it appears that a person adopted into a family became practically as much a member of it as one born within it, and generally ceased using the old terms of relationship toward his original family,

¹¹ *pu'ku'ci?* were adults following institutionalized patterns of "silly" behavior. This behavior readily lends itself to at least superficial interpretation as an escape mechanism for maladjusted people. This term was also applied to "difficult" children, a separated usage, though of course related.

ACCOUNT OF CAMANCHE INDIANS 195

in safety; that there is no cause for crying, and exhorts them to refrain; when, by mutual consent, they cease crying as easily as they commenced it, and go about their business. But if any of their friends have died in the fight, or otherwise, their grief appears deep and lasting. In this case, they immediately commence cutting and disfiguring themselves in a shocking manner, and with varied and unseemly gestures, accompanied with loud and tremendous yells, they seem to try to excel each other. They will ascend the loftiest peaks of the tallest mountains they can reach, and through the whole of the gloomiest night, send abroad through the surrounding forest their dismal wailings, in howls of horrid [59] accent. Nor are their signs of grief much less pungent when they lose their friends at home; but they hold all others enemies, and treat them accordingly, dead or alive. The reader has seen plenty of this in the preceding narrative; but I will here add, they fastened the scalps of our murdered friends to the bridles of their mules, so as to suspend them under the chin of the animals, and this was their constant practice while I was with them. When they encamped, they would fix them upon the top of long poles, and set them up by their tents, as I have seen flags upon garrisons, and elsewhere.

When a woman was to be confined, they removed the grass and everything else from the surface of the ground, and in a convenient place in the tent

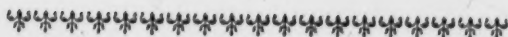
ACCOUNT OF CAMANCHE INDIANS 197

which time she takes no food, except a little broth 841
and some kind of vegetables; but on no account 262
will she taste of meat of any kind until her four
days are expired; after that, she bathes herself and
returns to her husband.

As to cleanliness in their persons, I think them 515
the most particular people I ever saw. They bathe
at all seasons of the year. I have frequently seen
them, both men and women, break the ice for this
purpose; and they are punctilious not to eat with- [264]
out washing. I never knew one of them to rise and
go abroad without washing. They are very par-
ticular in the above respect with regard to their
children; they are also far from being as indiffer-
ent to the kind and preparation of their food, as 262
one might suppose. The men eat horse-flesh when
they can get nothing else; but their women, as a
general thing, will not taste of it, nor will they per-
mit it to come near their dwellings. They subsist
mostly upon buffalo meat, with some other game,
which they cook, in a cleanly manner, with various
kinds of vegetables, some of which possess some-
what of the quality, and they have the faculty of
preparing it as a good substitute for bread.

In conclusion, perhaps I ought, to say, that with 727
reference to a point, of all others of the most sacred
importance to a captive female, (with gratitude
to my Maker I record it.) my fears were in no part
realized.

Query. - Is it not strange, indeed, that a nation 500

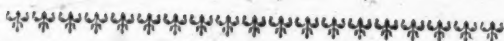


Comanche attacks against the New Mexican settle-175
ments continued, but at the same time the Indians439
were developing a new interest in trade. Their ac-721
tivities on the plains had netted them considerable
surplus wealth in hides, jerked meat, Apache and
Pawnee slaves, and horses.

The logical outlets for these were the trading fairs
held annually in the pueblos of Taos and Pecos. The
fairs occurred in September when the farming In-
dians had the fruits of their fields to offer for barter,
and making the events even more attractive were
the growing numbers of Spanish goods which were
finding their way into the market place. The Co-175
manches thus found it convenient to suspend hos-439
tilities for the weeks that the trading was in progress728
and to enter the pueblos under a flag of truce. Such648
an arrangement was acceptable to the Spaniards
since they looked upon the fairs as providing a use-
ful opportunity to try to convince their enemy to
accept a year around peace.

The friendly but brief contacts which the Coman-175
ches had with the New Mexicans at the fairs in no721
way, however, deterred them from undertaking648
raids against the settlements at other seasons of the
year. These became particularly devastating in the
decades following 1750, as the Comanches extended
the range of their attacks into the central and south-
ern portions of the province. By mid-century the
Comanches had broken the alliance with their old
friends the Utes and in pushing that tribe back into
the mountains, they became for the time being the
dominant people on the southern Plains.

The Comanche threat to New Mexico became true-727

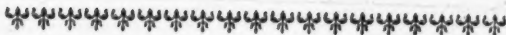


175 ly alarming as suggested by a report of 1751 which
721 claimed 500 Pueblo Indians and Spanish colonists
648 had been massacred up to that date. When the In-
721 dians numbering several hundred fell on Pecos Pu-
eblo in the summer of this same year, the Spaniards
organized a pursuit force and retaliated by surprising
the Comanches in their camp, killing 101, and tak-
ing the remainder prisoner. Although victories such
as this were uncommon, the New Mexican colonists,
721 having realized the gravity of their problems, were
648 more willing to tighten their defenses and join with
protective or punitive expeditions at a moment's
notice.

Unfortunately, the stiffened resistance merely
sharpened the challenge for the Comanche warrior
who thrived on danger. So, far from diminishing,
the Indian offenses against New Mexico continued
to increase in number and severity. In 1774, for ex-
175 ample, almost a thousand warriors devastated the
701 Tewa district north of Santa Fe. If this figure for
[648] their fighting force is accurate, it strongly suggests
[721] that the Comanches, since moving onto the plains
[161] and adapting to horse culture and buffalo hunting,
had experienced something of a population ex-
plosion. At the end of the century, General Pedro
de Nava estimated 2,000 warriors for the Eastern
Comanches and 4,000 for the Western.

175 The Spaniards won minor victories now and then,
648 but by the 1770's the Comanches had acquired fire-
721 arms in quantity so that they were an even more
[411] formidable enemy. Nevertheless Governor Juan
[728] Bautista de Anza in 1785 succeeded in summoning
a peace council composed of the leading chiefs of

13: Simmons H-4 (no date) 1967 NO6 Comanche NO6
(1785-1819) New Mexico



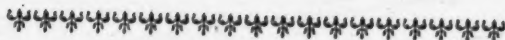
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REPORT OF THE COMMANDANT GENERAL
of the Western Interior Provinces, Jacobo Ugarte y
Loyola, to the Viceroy of New Spain, Manuel
Antonio Flórez, on the importance of main-
taining peace with the Comanches, and
campaigns which they have ex-
ecuted against the Apaches,
March 13, 1788.

SINCE the Comanche Nation made peace
with us, its members have undertaken on
their own initiative various campaigns
against the Apaches, in addition to supply-
ing us voluntarily with units of warriors who have
joined our expeditions in New Mexico.

On one expedition which they carried out last July
with 95 men commanded by one of their captains
called Ysanpami, they managed to kill five Faraon
Apaches, making prisoner 35 individuals of both
sexes and of all ages, according to a declaration
made in a message from the General of the [Coman-
che] Nation to the Governor of the Province [of
New Mexico], Dn Juan Bautista de Anza. The
original copy of this report is being sent to Your
Excellency.

There is no doubt that these Indian warriors will
launch other campaigns against the barbarians who
are their implacable foes. I have advised the pres-



Document Three

**FERNANDO DE LA CONCHA TO THE VICE-
roy Conde de Revilla Gigedo, Santa Fe, May 6,
1793, regarding inter-tribal warfare between
the Comanches and other Indians.**

THE FOUR nations of the Comanches, Utes, Navajos, and Jicarillas who have allied themselves with this Province [of New Mexico] continue without change their good conduct and they remain in harmony with the local settlers. But among themselves they still launch raids, and this stems primarily from the hate which the latter tribes feel for the first. 175
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[721]

At the beginning of last winter, the Utes and Navajos got together for a council and they resolved to go and attack the Comanches. They set out immediately and soon encountered a rancheria left unguarded by [Comanche] men who had gone buffalo hunting. They proceeded with little difficulty to destroy it completely, capturing and killing the women and children, and running off the horseherd that was there. When news of this reached the other Comanches, they swore to avenge the offense and raising a considerable war party, they attacked the village of the Utes in a like manner and completely destroyed one of their rancherias, with the result that both [tribes] have suffered almost equal harm from the other. 175
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727
[721]

13: Simmons H-4 (no date) 1967 N06 Comanche N06
(1785-1819) New Mexico

Document Four

COMMANDANT GENERAL PEDRO DE NAVA
to Governor Fernando de la Concha, Chi-
huahua, August 8, 1793.

I SEE with satisfaction by the official letter from Your Lordship of last July 25, that friendship and good harmony between the allied [Indian] nations and that Province [of New Mexico] continues, and that the Apaches have made new overtures for peace at Sabinal. To continue, the other news of which your Lordship advises me, I find most regrettable: that concerning the campaign carried out by the Comanches against the Pawnees which resulted in the loss of the [Comanche] Captain Hachaxas, and grave wounds for General Ecueracapa.

The measures which Your Lordship took in dispatching what medical aid was available to the [wounded general] seem to me appropriate. And I await further details which Your Lordship may acquire concerning the encounter between those two Nations, as well as news of the results of the settlement of the Apaches at Sabinal.

May God guard Your Lordship many years.

Chihuahua August 8, 1793 Pedro de Nava

their drums. There was a strict rule, that no dog must run ahead of the performers lest it be shot; so women would bid their children take care of any dogs they prized. Sometimes, however, a man who specially liked his dog might be asked to sacrifice it on this occasion. This taboo may have been common to several groups of dancers, but dogs were certainly especially offensive to those of the Crow division. 595 535 231

During any of the dances the managers would threaten to strike laggards with clubs. 535

About the other dances I was only able to learn that the Horses and Little Horses wore buffalo-skin sashes that lacked the slit found elsewhere, and used rawhide rattles, decorated with yellow-hammer feathers; the Horses also had spears, trimmed with eagle feathers. 292 534 293

When the master of the *na'wapiñar* had decided that the time for action had arrived, he caused the dancing to cease and had the Comanche prepare for the warpath. On the night before setting out the tribesmen assembled, coming in pairs toward the front and in single file behind. Then occurred the ceremony called *ñotsäit'*. The women brought a buffalo hide and sticks. Some men held up one side of the hide, while the women held the opposite side, and all belabored it with the sticks, a special song being intoned by the master alone and taken up by the rest.¹ 726 533

On the next day the Comanche started against the enemy, led by the master. They appointed scouts to determine the hostile tribe's position. On their return buffalo chips were piled up, and the leader went in front of the heap to sing a war song. The pile of chips represented a sort of oath to the effect that the enemy's camp was really situated in the place specified, and also marked a spot for the Comanche to return to. After a successful raid public thanks were rendered to those who had avenged the injury. Scalps were set on a pole and carried aloft by the main chief as he rode ahead on the return trip. His body was stripped to the waist and painted black. War songs were chanted and guns were discharged as the party came back. Those who had remained in camp saw the scalp and knew that the injury had been avenged. 297 727 297

A number of questions were asked to determine traces of typical elements of military societies as found among the Plains tribes. In reply to one of these queries I was told that some warriors had hooked sticks with a long spear-point at the bottom, the bent part being decorated with two pairs of eagle feathers. I could not ascertain that these regalia were correlated with a special tribal division or dance. Again, I learned that there were 701 714

¹ This ceremony has been noted among the Nez Percé, Lemhi Shoshone, and Crow. The last-mentioned tribe borrowed it from the (Wind River) Shoshone. [711]

dred Comanches were in military service. The people were proud of their young warriors and showered them with honors remarkably like the treatment accorded the warriors when they were the lords of the Southern Plains. 157
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The love of pageantry creates a problem. The business-like course of white life deprives the Comanches of more of it than they like. This characteristic of the people is apparent at the annual Indian Exposition at Anadarko, a commercial show sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. The performance has little historical accuracy, but this does not offend the Indians. They are more concerned with the spirit of display than about historical authenticity. They will bankrupt themselves to get there, and then wear an unheard of costume with self-satisfaction. Any special occasion, as Christmas and July 4, affords opportunity for pageantry. Departing and returning warriors of World War II were honored with feasts, parades, and variations of the old-time war and victory dances. 181
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The Comanches have always gotten a great deal of pleasure from social contacts. Today they tend to indulge in this type of pleasure at the expense of their work and obligations. Council meetings, ceremonies, and family consultations once brought the people together, but now decisions are made individually with white officials. The peyote ceremony was, in part, an attempt to satisfy the social urge. 571
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At the close of a full life-span of time since they were compelled to give up their nomadic life, a few Comanches still sit and dream of past glories and of an untrammelled people who dwelt in an unmeasured wilderness. In retrospect they see once more the trooping warriors as they gallop toward the fray and hear their defiant whoops. They sit in the charmed circle of counsellors of the tribe. Of reservations and agents, of farms and towns, of railways and other innovations they grow forgetful. There will be some who will continue to dream until the end of life. 157

On the other hand, the Comanches as a group have long since ceased to roam, to strive for the old, or to dream. 178
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The Squaws are [ca. 1818]

literally "hewers of wood and drawers of water," to their
dominate and supercilious husbands. Every description of
domestic labour is imposed upon them to a degree not usual,
even among savages, and they seem to endure the burden
with an uncomplaining cheerfulness; or rather, with the
quiescence of a temper subdued by habit and ignorance, to
a condition the most onerous and humiliating. But commis-
eration is more sensibly awakened to their moral, than to
their physical state, for they exhibit a total departure from
every thing that is amiable or interesting in the sex. To
the most hideous degeneracy from feminine suavity and
agreeableness of person, they unite a more than commen-
surate debasement of mind and manners. The choice porce-
lain of nature has become as the coarsest potters clay; and
the bland adornments of female character, have given place
to a fierce and unmitigated barbarism. In truth the largest
portion of the nation's barbarity consists in the character of
their women. They are infinitely more cruel and ferocious
than the men, and are much more addicted to pilfering, in
which they have acquired a proficiency that almost defies
detection. They take a peculiar delight in torturing the
adult male prisoners, who, according to an ancient custom,
are surrendered to their fiend-like amusement for three days
succeeding their arrival in the village. The quantum of
punishment that is inflicted, is however, in some degree
proportioned to the events of the campaign. If the war
party have suffered no damage, it is comparatively light
and trivial, amounting only to a few gentle flagellations,
by way of giving merriment to the dance, and cadence to
the song of triumph. But those who are captured on a dis-
astrous excursion, are punished with a most revolting bar-
barity, that often terminates in death. During the three
days of abandonment by the men, the prisoner is stretched
on the ground, each extremity pinioned to a stake, where
he lies motionless, save in the writhings of fear and anguish,
and exposed to the fury of the squaws, who alternately
recreate themselves by inflicting on their prostrate enemy
every variety of torture that a savage fancy can suggest.
At evening the passive victim is released, to undergo a more

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[Ca. 1818]

complicated suffering. The well known shout "come to the dance," resounds through the camp, and the welkin rings with the screams and yells of infuriate females, trooping impetuous to the scene of torment. The wretched captive, bearing a staff on which are pendent, the scalps of his friends and companions, it may be, of his father and brethren who were slain in the fury of the recent combat, is hurried to the appointed spot, where the frantic crowd assemble around him, impatient to begin their orgies. Faint with fear and trembling, he is hurled to the centre, while the shouting throng gather around in tumultuous circles, and assail him with clubs, and thongs, and knives, and javelins, and fire-brands, in unmeasured and reckless fury, compelling him the while, to unite his voice with the hellish choir, to dance and sing, and wave the standard, reeking with the gory scalps of his kindred, until he sinks to the ground, borne down with fatigue and excess of torment. He is then again staked-out on the earth, to await the diversions of the morrow, and the morrow—when similar scenes are re-acted upon him. If haply, he survives this severe initiation, he is afterwards exempt from corporal punishment, is considered a member, sub conditionis, of their society, and is attached as a slave to the family of the warrior who captured him, where he is generally treated with humanity. The men object to the abolition of this dreadful custom of surrendering their prisoners, on account of its antiquity, and the gratification it affords the squaws; but they will sometimes interfere to repress excessive barbarities.

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When they capture boys and girls, as they often do in their excursions to the Spanish provinces, they usually treat them with much lenity and kindness, and retain them in a kind of filial servitude, very little inferior to the condition of native children. It is singular with what facility these ill-fated youths will assimilate themselves to the habits of their new associates. Spanish boys from 10 to 15 years old will become so reconciled to their captivity in a few weeks after their introduction to this wild and uncultured society, as to be distinguishable only by the slight variations of nature, from their savage companions, and will generally out-

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1954 NO6 Comanche NO6
Texas

David G. Burnet's Letters

131

[ca. 1818]

strip them in rude and vicious licentiousness. There are, however, some instances of tenacious sensibility, sufficient perhaps to redeem the species from this lamentable propensity to deterioration. 175 727

My next Letter will close the subject of the Comanches.

B.

[*The Cincinnati Literary Gazette*, June 5, 1824]

Letter IV.

The Comanches conduct all their military operations on horseback. So exclusively are they habituated to the cavalry mode of warfare, that to place them on foot would be in effect, to put them *hors de combat*, to render them totally inefficient. They are generally well mounted when on a hostile excursion, and are scarcely exceeded in the art of horsemanship, to which they are trained from early infancy. Both in war and hunting, they rely much on the speed of their horses, and are careful to select for their own use, the best and fleetest among their furtive herds. 175 726 492

The day previous to starting for war, the party militant parade through the village mounted and accoutred, and bedaubed with paints, in their most gallant and frightful style. They march, or rather gallop in a line of single file, and have very few evolutions; but they contrive to give diversity and effect to their maneuvers, by frequent hideous yells, and antic gesticulations, which, combined with their wild and savage costume, give to the exhibition, if not a dreadful, at least a superlatively ludicrous appearance. Their habiliments on these occasions seem to be a motley assemblage of every rude and awkward device that can render their externals grotesque and terrific, or rather, to an informed spectator, fantastical and ridiculous.—A stranger might well imagine that he had gotten upon the parade ground of the Prince of Pandemonium: but an acquaintance with the real characters of the seemingly hideous spectres that shock and astound his vision, would convert the appalling spectacle into a scene of pantomimical foolery. These 175 726 714

175 [ca. 1818]
726 [ca. 1818] doughty warriors are much more terrible in appearance,
than in reality; and such is generally the character of the
southern Indians.

[492] They always set out on their predatory adventures to
the provinces with two creatures; a mule or inferior horse
to perform the drudgery of the journey, and their favorite
war-horse, who is carefully led, and kept fresh, and vigorous,
until arriving in the vicinity of the intended object of attack.
The most wary circumspection is then adopted in all their
movements. A private encampment is formed, deep em-
bosomed in the forest, where the fatigue horses, with the
[492] saddles and other baggage are deposited, in charge of a few
[593] men, and perhaps women, who often accompany their hus-
bands on their military excursions, and answer all the pur-
poses of grooms and menials. The more daring warriors
sally out under cover of moon-light, from this secret rally-
ing point, to reconnoitre the neighboring settlement in quest
of prey. They so regulate their departure from home as to
arrive at the intended place of assault about the full of the
moon, and always make their attack at midnight. If they
175 succeed in capturing a drove of mules and horses, they drive
726 them with the utmost speed, night and day, until they cross
727 the Rio Grande, beyond which they are seldom pursued.
231 They frequently drive off a thousand head of these animals
at one time; but many of them are destroyed on the way by
crossing water-courses, or worn out by fatigue and aban-
doned to perish; or should they revive, to herd with the wild
horses, numerous gangs of which roam through the country,
where a perennial verdure affords them an abundant sub-
sistence.

175 The number of mules and horses that these Indians
727 capture annually from the Spaniards is immense, probably
231 not less than 10,000, and perhaps the one half of these are
destroyed, or left derelict, in the hurry and tumult of the
homeward march.

175 The warriors, when they venture from their hiding-
726 place, which they seldom do, except under favor of the
492 Queen of Night, either to reconnoitre, or make an attack,
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727 Comanche society in the nineteenth century was constantly recouping its losses by incorporating captives into the tribe. Such captives were taken as children and mildly exploited as houseworkers, if they were girls, or put to work as herders, if boys. The girls were ultimately married by their [599] captors and so acquired full citizenship. The boys were allowed to join war parties and they, too, were incorporated after a time into the kinship system through adoption as "brothers" or "sons" by their captors or some other Comanche friend. Some captives, however, although they achieved free status in manhood, were not absorbed into a family by adoption. Conversely, attrition so decimated a number of Comanche families that 627 only one or two males were left as survivors. These men and unadopted captives had no brothers upon whom to call when hard put to prosecute a wrong. In such a plight there could be no justice for them if left to their own resources. Aggressors would have a free hand.

At this point the Comanches met the social need for a check on aggression and the provision of redress by means of a simple utilization of the materials at hand. They held no constitutional convention to devise new [591] instruments of government. Personal power was the recognized basis of social relations between men. Power out of control was the threat. Controlled power was the countercheck naturally hit upon. The weak-kneed victim of aggression who had no kin to back him turned to some great warriors to press his cause for him "A brave, well-known warrior," runs the stock phrase.

627 The brave, well-known warrior simply took over the case on behalf of the injured party and prosecuted it as his own. It gave him a neat chance 555 to face down an upstart warrior, to serve his own ends of self-glorification while acting in the interest of the general social welfare—not against it. He could add to the luster of his status while upholding the law of marriage, instead of flouting it. Vanity and social altruism were wedded in one act and both were exploited for the social good. Their gratification was the sole reward, for the warrior champion received no compensation nor any share of the damages collected.

627 The intervening warrior was acting as a legal champion. He made no pretense of judging the case or of mediating. He entered with the aim of forcing the defendant to pay damages exactly as the injured party would have forced him, if he could. And if damages could not be squeezed out, he personally assaulted the defendant with all the violence he could muster. The ultimate sanction was his to use, if need be.

627 Comanche procedure in the wife absconding cases never involved questions of fact, for fact and evidence were cleared in preliminary investigation by the husband. He had no problem; the presence of the wife with her lover was enough. Adultery, however, was usually surreptitious. And this posed problems. To meet them the suspecting husband had recourse [627] [599]

10 • THE COMANCHES

175 man, if he was fortunate, could become a peace chief, but a peace chief possessed
178 no real authority and functioned most importantly as a mediator in the disputes
624 which arose among the younger men.

175 With the greater food supply offered by the seemingly boundless bison
178 herds, hunting magic decreased in importance. Antelope magic did persist from
224 the Shoshone heritage. The more favorable living conditions and constant food
789 supply also allowed the individual bands, which had retained their Basin character-
621 istics, to become larger and to achieve a greater degree of independence from their
222 sister bands. The emphasis on the buffalo as a food source also tended to decrease
the importance of gathering and exploitation of the floral environment for food.
Further, the Comanches made little or no use of fish and of such small game as
rabbits (Lowie 1954:6).

175 The Basin Shoshone practice of infanticide disappeared as the family group
178 could more efficiently care for its offspring. The practice of enculturating slaves
847 and captives became common among the Comanches in order to augment their
727 numbers and specifically to free males for hunting and warfare. The stress on
563 war and hunting also tended to debase the position of women, and such practices
573 as the mutilation of wives, a custom which had never occurred in Basin Shoshone
304 culture, came into practice.

175 Patterns of religious belief and behavior also underwent certain changes
178 from Basin life to the Plains. A vaguely defined belief in a Great Spirit persisted,
771 as did the relative lack of concern with the afterlife. However, the intense fear of
774 ghosts held by the Basin Shoshone diminished in the Comanche Plains culture.
775 Also, the practice of power transmission from individual to individual, instead
776 of power source to individual, developed in importance. The decrease in ghost
777 fear and, it is assumed, witchcraft in Comanche culture, as opposed to the Basin
778 culture, was greatly facilitated by the lessening of intrasocial tensions and the
779 Comanches' ability, through warfare, to turn aggressions outward and away from
721 the primary group. As a whole, Comanche religious patterns were exceedingly
796 simple and lacking in elaborate ceremonialism and ritual, at least compared to their
Plains neighbors (Hoebel 1940:83).

175 The Comanches possessed characteristics, other than their paucity of
ceremonialism, which served to differentiate them from other Plains tribes. The
171 Comanche bands were more self-managing than bands found among other Plains
621 groups. Warrior societies, a diagnostic trait of Plains culture, were lacking in
579 Comanche society except in the most rudimentary form. The Sun Dance was not
794 a vital aspect of Comanche culture. Decoration of clothing with beads, quills,
291 and ornaments of bone, shell, and metal was deemphasized, while heavy fringing
342 of the garments was the rule. The Comanche tepee was built on a four-pole base
like that of the Blackfoot, Sarsi, Ute, and Shoshone; while the Comanches' historic
neighbors, such as the Kiowa, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa-Apache used a three-
pole foundation (Lowie 1954:33).

721 By the early nineteenth century the bison herds were greatly diminished
223 on the south Plains, and the Comanches increasingly turned to raiding to augment
their economy. During this period the Comanches raided New Mexico, the Santa
Fe Trail, northern Texas, and Old Mexico, sometimes as far south as Durango.

595 camp functioning properly. The tasks were varied and time-consuming, and no one woman could have taken care of all of them.

462 The warrior-husband was the killer of game, the procurer of buffalo meat, the Comanches' principal source of food. He had to have
492 two sets of trained horses—one trained for war, the other for the killing of buffalo. In either pursuit, his life was largely dependent on the horse. He manufactured both his riding gear and his weapons, and
462 he trained his own horses. His fighting was practically on a twelve-month basis, since, though the Comanches did not like winter fighting,
721 most of the ambitious warriors made raiding expeditions into Old Mexico when the group went into winter camp.

462 The husband, therefore, could be of little or no help around the camp, and the labor had to be divided among the women. Usually
492 one of the women was an expert horsewoman and had the responsibility of her husband's horse herd, which often numbered a hundred
231 or more. When the fall hunt was on for the winter's supply of meat,
224 the wives did the skinning and butchering. They dried the meat and
251 made the pemmican. Also, they prepared and tanned the hides. After
462 the tanning came the making of clothing. This included everything
281 the family wore, both in summer and winter. Since there was neither
294 needle nor thread, the holes in the leather were made with a stone
283 awl or one made from bone, and sinew taken from along the backbone of a buffalo or deer was used for thread.
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281 Other hides were converted into robes for bedding or into covers
493 for the tepees. When camp was moved, tepees had to be taken down and fastened on travois, like all the other camp gear, and then camp must be set up again at the new location. All of this was strictly woman's work.

Somewhere, sometime, during breathing spells from all these duties, the women bore babies, nursed them, and raised them to be
436 good Comanches. And all this was in a society without a recognized medium of exchange, in which no one could hire anything done. The
567 Comanches did, however, utilize slave labor. Successful warriors furnished captive women to their wives for helpers. These captive women
727 were given the opportunity to trade their slave status for wifehood, and captive girls were carefully trained to become Comanche wives.
582 Captive boys were trained as warriors to fill the vacancies in the warrior ranks. In addition to members of other tribes, Anglos, Spaniards, and Mexicans were abducted to be made slaves.

WHO WAS MO-CHO-ROOK?

87

men and big boys were to be killed. The only exception would be 721 if an old saddlemaker was willing to come along and work for his life.

The women and children and all the loot were to be brought to a central spot where the booty was to be loaded on the hundred pack-horses, along with the best of the women and the children. The prisoners would be tied on and the horses turned loose so as to be driven across the desert-like land. The plan was to start as soon as possible and drive all night, and they would be to water before the middle of the next forenoon.

There were to be water bags, so as to give prisoners a drink, but no warrior was to touch water until they arrived at the rendezvous with the warriors who had the horses. There they figured they could safely rest a day, and then it was several hard days to the river and safety. The leader was sure that the pursuit would not be strong enough to follow across the river.

The horses were run off, the town was captured, all desirable loot was placed on the packhorses, and the retreat was made safely back across the river. But one thing unforeseen and un contemplated happened. The women had such a fear of life as Comanche slaves that they fought the warriors to the death. The story is that they would even take up their children and hurl them at the warriors as though they were sticks of wood.

The women used their butcher knives, hatchets, and axes for weapons, anything they could get their hands on, even the children. Thoroughly enraged, the warriors not only killed all the women, young and old, but they fired the town against the orders of their leader, who figured this would notify the whole countryside.

While the warriors were searching and firing one of the last houses, 727 they heard a baby cry and found a very young baby boy, hidden up on the top of the wall, shoved back under the roof. This was the one living person of all of those that had been left in the town. Though they were many days from their womenfolks, they were able to bring this child to their women alive. He was raised as a Comanche and became a great warrior. He was Mo-cho-rook.

I said earlier that as nearly as I could tell, he was already a legend 554 among the Comanches while yet he lived. I doubt that I can remember half of the stories that were told concerning him. One was that he 593 would have but one wife at a time, and they soon died from overwork. 587 Another was that his present wife was the fourth sister he had had as

⁵⁹³a wife, the other three having died from overwork. Neither would he
⁵⁸⁷tolerate a slave woman to help his wife.

[519] According to Comanche custom, if you buy a wife and if for any reason she is unsatisfactory, if she runs away, or if she dies, you may go to the wife's father and demand the purchase price back, or another wife if there is still an unmarried daughter.

● 727 Concerning Mo-cho-rook's cruelty, it was said that he never took a prisoner. He killed all, as he came to them: warriors, women, old men, children, babies; and he took no prisoners. My memory is too faulty to give the number of scalps he was supposed to still have. One [283] thing seemed pretty authentic. He was supposed to have a full-length lariat (approximately thirty-three feet) that he had plaited from women's hair—Mexican, Indian, and white.

²⁸³I was never able to learn whether plaiting was an American Indian-developed art, or if it was learned from the Spanish. Many of the [172] old fellows plaited excellent round rawhide ropes, and also many of them were quite proud of their horsehair lariats. Mo-cho-rook was the one and only man who was supposed to have one plaited from women's hair.

752 His death on October 4, 1915, at the age of eighty-nine, was slightly on the prosaic side. At least he died in bed. But he saw fit to lend a dramatic touch. He had sustained a broken hip while working with his horses. They brought a doctor out from Lawton, when he refused to go to the Indian hospital. The doctor put him in a cast, but when the doctor came back in a few days, he found that the old chap had made his wife cut the cast off. She had brought him dogwood switches from the creek, and he had plaited himself a wicker cast to hold his leg and hip. He lived only a short time.

¹²⁷As to his age, here is all we have to go by. The Comanche roll was
⁶⁵⁷made up soon after the surrender in 1875. At that time he was arbitrarily given the birth year of 1826. That means that they judged him
¹⁶⁵to be fifty years old. It is extremely unlikely that even then any of the warriors who were on the raid when he was kidnapped from Mexico were alive. A little arithmetic will show that they would have been at least seventy years old. That is just older than Indians became at that time, under the conditions they lived in.

701 Another bit of arithmetic brings some interesting conclusions. Supposing that Mo-Cho-rook's birth year is approximately correct, that means he would have been an active warrior by the year 1844. That